ID: 88076787

Box 2
Item 2-122

BLM Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Program Leads Meeting

Capital Hilton, 1001 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20036
September 21, 2010

Participants:

Kristin Bail
Louis Brueggeman
Teresa Ann Ciapusci
Lara Douglas
Fred Edwards
Travis Haby
Joel Larson
Dan Lechefsky
Patrick Mahoney
Ronald McCormick
Tom Mendenhall
Nikki Moore
Raul Morales
Kit Muller
Kathy Radigan
Barry Rose
Ed Ruda
Rick Schultz
Mi-Yo-Shi Stith
Joe Stout

Facilitation Team: Susan Hayman and Adair Muth, EnviroIssues

Welcome and Introductions

Susan Hayman, EnviroIssues facilitator, welcomed meeting participants, led team introductions, and asked everyone to introduce themselves and their position in the Bureau of Land Management.

Susan reviewed the agenda and the meeting objectives, which included discussing BLM's proposed landscape approach for developing and implementing ecoregional management direction, BLM's rapid ecoregional assessments (REAs) in 2010 and 2011, how BLM REAs can help set up/align BLM programs of work, and how BLM's landscape approach relates to other landscape initiatives.

BLM's Landscape Approach for Developing and Implementing Ecoregional Management Direction

Kit Muller, BLM Strategic Planner, thanked everyone for coming. He began by explaining that a year ago the Secretary of Interior, Ken Salazar signed legislation to create eight Climate Science Centers and a network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives across the nation. Kit said that he and Dan Lechefsky suggested to the Department that each of the Bureaus should start to have a dialogue about how they are beginning a landscape approach and to determine how to start integrating these efforts.

Kit said the upcoming meeting on Thursday was organized for all of the major natural resource bureaus to come together and start that discussion. Kit said that as they put the presentation for Thursday together they realized that it would be beneficial to share the same information internally within BLM.

Originally BLM had planned on hosting a similar meeting with national stakeholders, but have since decided to have smaller, more focused meetings with various stakeholders over the next six months. The BLM is meeting with the Western Governor's Association (WGA) and state fish and wildlife agencies this fall, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation has also expressed an interest in meeting. Kit asked meeting attendees to let contact him if they know of any other groups that might be interested in having a conversation about the BLM's landscape approach and integrating efforts.

Kit presented a PowerPoint presentation titled "Rapid Ecoregional Assessments and a Proposed Landscape Approach for Managing Public Lands." He said he would give a brief introduction of each of these two efforts initiated by BLM and then talk about why the BLM is doing this, how they will integrate it, next steps, and the work plan for 2011.

The BLM has initiated seven Rapid Ecoregional Assessments (REAs) this year covering a total of ~~355~~ 400 million acres. REAs are a synthesis of existing information about natural resource conditions and trends within an ecoregion. REAs look at three sets of terrestrial values and cover all lands, public and private, within a given assessment. The BLM is conducting the REAs in cooperation with other state and federal agencies, and are the first step in what the BLM is calling a "landscape approach" for managing public lands.

BLM is initiating this landscape approach because the management issues they face today including fire, climate change, invasive species and development, transcend the traditional boundaries in the Bureau and field offices. These issues need to be addressed on multiple scales and a landscape approach can help the BLM and others understand and address these widespread environmental changes.

The idea of a landscape approach is not new to the BLM; they are building on a foundation of prior landscape-scale management efforts including:

- 1994 Rangeland Reform
- 1996 Northwest Forest Plan
- 2000 Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project
- 2005-2008 Energy Policy Act Assessments of Energy Potential

The BLM went through a significant transition when Jim Caswell became BLM Director in 2007. Caswell previously worked for the U.S. Forest Service during the 'spotted owl years' and warned that the BLM was headed in the same direction with sage-grouse. Caswell said the BLM needed to develop a landscape strategy and encouraged rapid ecoregional assessments. A pilot project was initiated in the Northern Great Basin with the help of BLM's National Coordination Center (NOC). Caswell recognized the importance of transitioning the work to carry through the new administration, and began talking to conservation groups in Washington and worked with a transition team to carry through the change in administration.

In addition to the prior landscape-scale initiatives, the BLM has several efforts underway that may help integrate the landscape approach. These include:

- Solar, wind, geothermal and energy corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements (PEIS)
- Healthy Lands Initiative
- Native Plant Materials Program
- Sage-grouse Strategy
- Assessment, Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) Strategy

A key purpose of the REAs and a landscape approach is to better integrate these ongoing, interrelated efforts.

Kit recognized that the BLM is not the only organization working on a landscape approach; many federal, state, and non-governmental (NGO) organizations are also pursuing landscape approaches. Kit said that while terminology may vary from agency to agency, they are all moving in the same direction and he is interested in integrating these activities across the bureaus.

The BLM held a workshop in Park City in June to discuss the need to develop a landscape approach and integrate activities across bureaus. The meeting was primarily BLM managers and program leads, but federal and state agency and WGA representatives also attended. About 100 people participated in the workshop, which was organized around five interrelated components:

1. Rapid Ecoregional Assessments
2. Ecoregional Direction
3. Field Implementation
4. Monitoring for Adaptive Management
5. Science Integration

Kit mentioned that Teresa Ann Ciapusci would be presenting on the first component, the REAs, therefore, he would focus on the other four. **Ecoregional direction** is a process to step down what is learned from the assessments. Ecoregional direction:

- Is developed through an iterative process with input from BLM staff, partner agencies, stakeholders and Tribes
- Identifies focal areas for conservation and development
- Identifies regional mitigation strategies
- Addresses science and monitoring needs
- Provides framework for field-level coordination

Field implementation is the next step in the landscape approach. Field offices will use the ecoregional direction to:

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- Participate in amending BLM's land use plans, where necessary
- Revise and implement mitigation measures for authorized land uses, including Best Management Practices
- Analyze and implement proposed projects and treatments
- Conduct land tenure adjustments
- Perform sub-assessments and monitoring
- Develop budgets that focus and share management resources

Monitoring for adaptive management is part of field implementation and is key to adaptive management. In order to develop conservation and development strategies, and evaluate their effectiveness, the BLM needs the ability to collect, synthesize, and share geospatial information. BLM is finalizing the AIM Strategy that will standardize data collection and retrieval so information is comparable over time, and can be readily accessed and shared.

While it appears to be the last step in the landscape approach, **science integration** is ongoing and iterative. The BLM's landscape approach is evolving within the DOI's overall climate change framework, which includes the formation of Climate Change Science Centers (CSCs) and Landscape Conservations Cooperatives (LCCs).

At the workshop in Park City, the five components above were explored and participants reached some key points of consensus:

- This is the right thing to do – keep moving forward
- All BLM programs must be involved, not just planning and renewable resources
- There is a need for more internal communication about these projects

Workshop participants also identified several points that need more discussion and work:

- Define the step-down process and clarify how it will be developed
- Integrate the landscape approach with existing programs and processes
- Develop a strategic approach for interagency coordination
- Address concerns about the duplication of efforts, as well as capacity issues, particularly for state agencies

Following the workshop, BLM Director Bob Abbey and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) were briefed on the results. Kit said they asked the ELT three questions: Did they think the overall work plan for 2010 make sense, how could they ensure the ELT was effectively engaged about development of the process, and whether or not they had thoughts about how to more effectively approach interagency coordination. Kit said they decided to periodically brief the ELT, rather than create a new management team, and said they had a long discussion about interagency coordination.

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Kit said, based on the recommendations from the workshop and the ongoing work with the assessments, the following is planned for 2010-2011:

- Proceed with the seven assessments initiated this year
- Document and discuss "lessons learned" from previous landscape efforts, including hosting two workshops to share and validate these lessons learned
- Develop step-down process, using the lessons learned, and convene three regional BLM meetings to refine the step-down process. Meetings will be held in the Wyoming Basin, Northern Great Basin, and Chihuahuan Desert regions, where partial assessments have been completed.
- Initiate communication and outreach
- Continue interagency dialogue and develop strategic approach for coordination

Kit thanked everyone for coming and asked for any questions.

Questions/Comments

Q: I think this is a great model. You mentioned other agencies are coming together – are you going to talk about what the role of those other agencies is in this? Would it be useful to identify their strengths? What is the purpose of them all coming together?

Kit Muller: *In the REAs we initiated this year, other agencies already have a role at the regional scale. From my perspective, the meeting we are holding on Thursday could be the first of several meetings. Ideally, each of the bureaus would take on the task to hold similar presentations to share what they are doing. We could then start to tease out each agency's strengths and begin to design an approach that would complement what each agency is doing.*

Q: What is the outcome/goal? If other agencies have a different outcome/goal there may be different ways to get there.

Kit Muller: *Our outcome /goal is to use the assessments to determine where priorities should be, to determine conservation areas, and those areas that should be developed. We want to find those areas on a landscape scale so we can focus and integrate our work as an agency.*

Q: This would require that we, as an agency, make a longer term commitment of resources and attention. We find that difficult because of declining budgets. Could we complete one of the assessments sooner to show tangible outcomes and on-the-ground results?

Kit Muller: *I don't think we can speed up one of the assessments because they are contracted out and on a particular schedule. With that said, many states invested a lot into the Healthy Lands Initiative*

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and they are seeing the utility of results from that effort. New Mexico, for example, is trying to identify high priority conservation areas. If you look across the bureau, there are significant pockets of support for these efforts.

Q: The Northern Great Basin pilot was a three state effort – what would you say is hampering those states to reach across state lines at this point? How do we help them implement the step-down process across state lines?

Travis Haby: *The assessments clearly go across state lines – we have found that states work together well to do the assessments across state lines. In terms of the step-down process, it is something we will have to work on state by state.*

Q: Are there incentives from the Washington Office (WO) to encourage states to work beyond state lines?

Kit Muller: *The Healthy Lands Initiative funding is about $8 million. One thought is to propose that project funding be pooled in each state and then the $8 million would be used to leverage cross-state work. Again, this is one of the things we will have to address with as part of step-down process.*

Q: I think it would be beneficial to have staff located within the ecoregions that have the highest need in terms of the sensitivity of the resources, instead of organizing staff around geographic areas. This would help us achieve prioritization of where work needs to happen. How do we get there as an agency?

Dan Lechefsky: *Those areas of high prioritization are going to change over time but what I am hearing you say is that we need more flexibility and mobility for how we can move staff and resources.*

C: There are two existing information sources in the aquatic world that can help with geographic areas, specifically in WY, UT and CO. The first is the Conservation Success Index (CSI) developed by Trout Unlimited, and the other is the National Fish Habitat Assessment Plan (NFHAP). Both of these resources are available now and should be incorporated into what you are doing.

Travis Haby: *We had a Webinar with Jack Williams on the CSI process and it really helped to inform our process.*

Teresa Ann Ciapusci: *We also just hired an aquatic ecologist lead at the National Operations Center (NOC) who will be starting the middle of October.*

BLM's Rapid Ecoregional Assessment (REA) Program for 2010-2011

Teresa Ann Ciapusci, BLM National Operations Center Branch Chief, gave a PowerPoint presentation titled "Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Step 1 of BLM's Landscape Approach." She began by saying she would like to talk about a continuation of change management and paradigm shift, not just for BLM, but for all entities including states, tribes and NGOs.

The BLM's landscape approach is really a continuous, interactive cycle that enables management to assess, revise, and adapt over time. One factor in the landscape approach process is the Rapid Ecoregional Assessments. REAs assess the status of key ecoregional values, forecast trends, identify management opportunities, and provide information and tools. An important distinction is that REAs do not make decisions or allocations.

REAs cross land ownership boundaries and are designed to help answer some of the landscape-scale management questions, though they do not include specific things that require NEPA decisions. REAs document the current status of conservation elements and what we currently know. One of the challenges is that the data belongs to many different entities – BLM is trying to compile the data from the different entities. REAs also identify opportunities for resource conservation and development and identify data gaps and science needs for unanswered questions.

REA fundamentals:

- REAs are multi-funded efforts – the REAs this year were funded through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and Climate Change funds
- REAs are being managed under an IDIQ (Indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity) contract supervised by the BLM, with four contractors named under the contract
- REAs are not decisions
- The acronym starts with "rapid," which is intended to be an 18-month process, from the start of the contract to final documents
- REAs use only available information – no new ~~research or~~ data is being collected
- The assessments will be appropriately peer review; BLM has contracted with U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to ~~review the science portion of the documents~~ organize for peer review.

REAs include the Western States and Alaska and encompass all ownerships, not just BLM lands. The extent is based on the Commission for Environmental Cooperation Level III ecoregions and combinations. The grain size is 5th field, 10-digit hydrologic units, 30-meter grid. The assessments initiated this year are:

- Central Basin and Range
- Colorado Plateaus
- Mojave Basin and Range
- Sonoran Desert
- Middle Rockies
- Northwestern Great Plains

- Northwestern Glaciated Plains

The assessments proposed for 2011 are:

- Snake River Plain
- Wyoming Basin
- Northern Basin and Range
- Chihuahuan Desert

The basic REA components are management questions, conceptual models, conservation elements, change agents, and ecological integrity. Management questions drive the ecoregional assessment and are designed by the local management team to address the issues they are facing. They are designed to help clarify data gathering and data analysis, and designed to screen out irrelevant data. Teresa Ann directed participants to the handout entitled "Where are Areas with High Conservation and Restoration Potential and Areas with High Development Potential?" as an example of possible management questions that may be asked in an ecoregion.

Conceptual models are another basic component of the REAs and each REA will likely have one or two conceptual models developed as part of the assessment. Each assessment will have various conservation element classes. At a minimum, these include: native fish, wildlife, or plants of regional concern; regionally-important terrestrial ecological features, functions, or services; and regionally-important aquatic ecological features, functions, or services. Additionally, each assessment will consider change agents, including wildland fire, invasive species, development, and climate change.

The last component of the assessments is ecological integrity. Teresa Ann said the NOC has been looking at how to address ecological integrity, defined by Parrish et al. (2003) as "...the ability of an ecological system to support and maintain a community of organisms that has species composition, diversity, and functional organization comparable to those of natural habitats with a region." Ecological integrity needs to be addressed at the regional level when looking at land use plans.

Teresa Ann said that REAs are a contract and presented a slide showing the phases and organizational structure of the contract. The BLM has been completing the tasks under the first phase, initiation, and contracting out the tasks under Phases I and II.

Teresa Ann presented a slide showing the organization of the REAs themselves, which showed the different components, including the WO, NOC, contractors and others (state agencies, WGA, tribal governments, NGOs). The NOC is not doing these assessments by themselves, but rather working with a whole host of others. The BLM has many partners in this process and are looking to their partners for help on work plan development, including input on management questions and landscape attributes, as well as providing data.

Data management is an important aspect of the assessments, and the BLM is considering four aspects of data: Standards, components, information platform, and objectives.

- Standards:
  - BLM establishes data standards to define and select appropriate data
  - Ensure consistency between assessments
- Components:
  - Data management plan
  - Data quality evaluation criteria
- Information Platform
  - Maintains data freshness
  - Provides centralized access to data and information
  - Handle large volumes of data
- Objectives:
  - Facilitate compatibility and continuity of datasets
  - Ensure easy access to most information, and appropriate safeguards for confidential information

Data management roles in the REA process include:

- NOC
  - Data hosting and archiving final layers, QA/QC review, data quality criteria, technical support, and standards, where necessary
- State/Field Office
  - Inventory of data, assemble data, deliver to contractor
- Contractor
  - Assist offices in inventory
  - Digitize, edge-match, clean-up, and assemble data into seamless layers
  - Following standards supplied by BLM

Information portal needs to make these assessments successful include:

- Enable internal/external coordinating and collaboration
- Share documents, maps, and procedures on each regional assessment
- Enable interactive map display, query, mark-up, and analysis
- Single entry point to all data
- Flexibility
- Handle large volumes of data

Questions/Comments

Q: What is the process for determining appropriateness of the data? If there is a disagreement about which data should be used, who makes the final decision?

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Travis Haby: *The Assessment Management Team (AMT) in each ecoregion will decide which data is used. The data team at the NOC works with other partners to identify potential data sources. It is then the contractor's job to search for datasets to answer management questions or address conservation status. The contractor will use the data management plan, written by the data management team, to go through a data evaluation process to make sure data is relevant, timely, etc. If there are different datasets that meet all of the criteria, and there is a decision to be made about which dataset to use, the AMT would make that decision.*

Teresa Ann Ciapusci: *There also needs to be a paradigm shift and culture shift. Managers need to have trust – trust that we are getting good data and trust that we will use it appropriately and confidentially.*

Q: Who determines the change agents?

Travis Haby: T*he original four categories were brainstormed at a meeting in Reno. We used them as a way to manage the scope of these assessments. We encourage the AMT to ask relevant questions and add change agents to the roster if necessary. We ask partners and contractors to suggest change agents for a particular REA that we should include, and note that there may be different change agents in different ecoregions.*

Q: Is there a socio-economic aspect that will be addressed?

Teresa Ann Ciapusci: *The NOC has put in place a contract with USGS to get information on economic services. REAs weren't originally planned to incorporate socio-economic issues, but there may be a utility in including those issues and integrating that information into the REA process.*

Q: What is the AMT?

Travis Haby: *The AMT, or Assessment Management Team, consists of five to eight people and functions like a board, working with the REA project manager. Individuals on the AMT are state directors, branch chiefs, and some have non-federal agency representatives.*

C: Regarding the paradigm shift, agencies have been trying to build that shift for years for issues such as the spotted owl. BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) have different ideas of the right model for doing so. I would recommend that you build into the AMT process how you will deal with issues, such as the spotted owl. Perhaps part of solution may be to have the peer review process early.

Travis Haby: *The peer review process is multi-tiered. Peer review happens with the technical teams and with the different partners identifying the data, although it is not traditional, strict peer review. Peer review also occurs with the national technical teams, which are teams of specialists at the*

national level looking at the data to help coordinate use of data across ecoregions. BLM has an agreement with USGS for these technical teams. USGS will also establish a peer review process of reviewers outside of the ecoregion, which could be academics, the conservation community, or anyone not involved in the process.

Q: Is there a mechanism for adding new information to the assessments?

Travis Haby: *There are several opportunities to add new information. For example, new information may be added to the conceptual models, which will then be presented back to the AMT. Program leads are an important part of adding new information.*

C: If the program leads are involved from the beginning, then it would be a pool of information to take from, rather than having to add that information in later.

Teresa Ann Ciapusci: *We have the opportunity to learn from the first four REAS. The limitations that came with the ARRA funding didn't allow us to add things in. Future assessments we will be able to adjust and learn from what we have done.*

Q: Based on the REA phase's chart you presented, it looks like there is the opportunity to select change agents. How do we get involved in selecting those change agents?

Travis Haby: *During the initiation phase, change agents are discussed. Change agents are selected during phase I, task 1. By task 4, those change agents are pretty well set.*

Kit Muller: *The flexibility increases for 2011 REAs because there is not the time constraints associated with ARRA funding. We should use the management table to look at these change agents.*

Q: What is a working definition of change agent?

Kit Muller: *It is those processes that have a potential to affect conservation elements over time. So, for example, if we are concerned about vegetation composition, we need to think about what will affect that over time. Change agents can be positive, neutral or negative.*

Q: What year do you anticipate doing the actual implementation? This will affect budgets.

Kit Muller: *We started seven REAs in 2010 and those assessments will be completed early in 2012, at which point the field will have to begin the step-down process. Therefore, field work load associated with using the information will start in 2012 and will have implications for budgets in all of those states.*

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Potential to Coordinate REAs and Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) Needs

Dan Lechefsky, BLM National Climate Change Coordinator, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the potential to coordinate REAs and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). Dan said he first wanted to introduce the REAs and then explore the potential of having LCCs perform the REAs. He said folks in the field are asking what the difference is between REAs and LCCs and he hopes to clear that up in this presentation and then talk about coordination between the two.

LCCs are a network of 22 applied conservation science partnerships covering the entire United States and noted that their boundaries go into Mexico and Canada. LCCs take information from the Climate Change Science Centers (CSCs), NOAA and other places, use that information and apply it to solve conservation problems. LCCs are self-directed partnership organizations formed within very large landscapes. What LCCs are intended to do is still a subject of some discussion, but in essence, they will identify shared conservation priorities within each ecoregion, work towards shared conservation goals, and leverage resources to help achieve more towards shared goals. LCCs will provide a link between science and on-the-ground conservation delivery.

Since LCCs cover large portions of the landscape, they will involve multiple states and multiple ecoregions. Ecoregions are more or less nested within LCCs and all of the western states involve multiple LCCs. Dan showed a series of slides demonstrating that various partners may be involved in multiple LCCs and not all partners within an LCC will want to be involved in every project that LCC is involved with. LCCs are organizations that are going to have unique and varied needs for landscape-scale information.

REAs are not organizations, but are processes that result in landscape-scale information. REAs are led by BLM but are intended to inform everyone in the region. LCCs *need* landscape-scale information and REAs *will result in* landscape-scale information. Dan said the question is: can we do more to coordinate the two? Can REA outputs, or at least methodology, be adapted for use by LCCs? Is this something we would like to promote for the LCCs as a whole? REA information can be used for priority setting, identifying priorities gaps, NEPA, and accumulative impact analysis. The REA process itself is a good vehicle for developing partnerships and communicating with the public.

Dan talked about the opportunities for coordination between REAs and LCCs. Possible options include:

- Proceed with the scheduled REAs and start querying LCC partners to help identify management questions
- Involve LCC partners in data standards, data management, and data pooling
- Ask LCC partners for their opinions and thoughts as to where 2011 and 2012 REAs ought to be conducted

- Conduct pre-assessments west-wide, engaging the LCCs and identifying management questions and then use the pre-assessment information to determine future priorities
- LCCs take on sponsorship of REA updates

Questions/Comments

C: It would be useful to give an example of an assessment product that LCCs could potentially use for the external group on Thursday.

Q: Who drew the LCC boundaries?

Dan Lechefsky: *The LCC boundaries were developed by FWS and USGS based on bird conservation regions.*

Q: Is there someone at DOI who is the lead on LCCs?

Dan Lechefsky: T*here will be a lead on LCCs at DOI, but it is not well-defined who that is at this point.*

Q: Where are LCCs in terms of being established?

Dan Lechefsky: N*ine LCCs have been established this year. BLM is in the process of standing up the Great Basin LCC. Most of the LCCs have an acting coordinator and are meeting but many don't have charters or formal agreements yet.*

Q: Are there other ideas for coordination potential between REAs and LCCs?

Kit Muller: *In some of the areas where LCCs are being stood up there has been a fair amount of discussion about the relationship between REAs and LCCs. In Alaska, they have embraced the REAs and see it as an LCC product. There has also been discussion in the Desert LCC and Great Basin LCC about how to incorporate REAs. The relationship of these has been a point of concern with WGA, and Fish and Wildlife folks, but I think people are generally moving toward idea that these are complimentary.*

Q: Did Utah Resource Advisory Council (RAC) members express concern when you briefed them?

Kit Muller: *We briefed the Utah RAC last year on REAs and representatives from grazing and the oil and gas industries expressed concerns. It seems to me that you can look at REAs as providing a framework for addressing landscape-scale issues. The LCCs could take that product and refine it. LCCs could also look at REAs as a contracting process and use the same process. There are different dimensions to the REAs that LCCs could embrace and refine, either individually or the whole network*

itself. This may be a useful discussion for the Bureaus to have, that is, to look at the dimensions of REAs and use them as a starting point rather than have every LCC try to work this through on their own.

C: I think you could be very explicit about that on Thursday, maybe even in the introduction. I think it would be useful to talk more specifically about how those could be coordinated at the beginning of the meeting.

Q: How illustrative or illuminating are the results from the pilot? Would that be at all helpful to have snapshots of results to show what might be interesting or applicable to the federal partners?

Travis Haby: *We do have some good examples, in terms of change agents.*

C: Dan explained what REAs are and are not at the end of the meeting, but I think it would be useful to have that earlier in the presentation.

C: It would be useful to show the federal partners land base on the maps, to help them see how they are part of this.

C: A Web site would be a useful way to bring new people into the process.

Barry Rose: *We are working on launching an external website that will house all of the publicly available materials. The Web site should be up in the next 2-3 weeks, which includes information about REAs specifically and overview of the landscape approach. The other four pieces of the landscape approach will be phase II of the Web site.*

Next steps and closing remarks

Kit said that the BLM is designing this process as they are move forward and, through the process, are now seeing things that they wish they had done for the first four assessments, such as public involvement and including the human dimension. He reiterated that this is very much a work-in-progress. He said after the Park City workshop they decided to create a strike team to pull together recommendations from the workshop. He said they haven't formed the team yet, but that the people that led the different breakout sessions in the workshop are synthesizing the information. The strike team will create a draft action plan, which will be distributed to program leads in the WO, followed by the field committee and ELT. Kit said the action plan is the next document they will see, as well as interim products produced by the contractors on the first four REAs.

List of handouts

1. Agenda
2. Handout copy of PowerPoint Presentations
3. Map of Rapid Ecoregional Assessments
4. Map of LCCs with Nested REAs
5. The BLM's Landscape Approach for Managing Public Lands: Overview
6. The BLM's Landscape Approach for Managing Public Lands: Questions & Answers
7. An Introduction to Rapid Ecoregional Assessments
8. Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Questions and Answers
9. Matrix: Where are Areas with High Conservation and Restoration Potential and Areas with High Development Potential?

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Transcribed Flip Chart Notes
BLM-REA Program Leads Meeting, September 21, 2010

Landscape Approach: Q/A and Discussion topics

1. Identify potential roles and responsibilities of federal partners
    - BLM ⇨ federal partner work
    - Ask them what they are doing
2. Identify the outcome/goal of process; will help to determine potential alignment with partners
3. Test one REA/set of outcomes to demonstrate how this will work – enable sustained cultural changes
    - Get support for accomplishments
4. Northern Basin – 3 state effort
    - Will the effort/mgt extend across state lines in implementation?
    - Will there be incentives to do this?
5. Long term view ⇨ Staff/fund ecoregions based on sensitivity of resources and need
    - Alignment currently with existing BLM field/structure/states
    - Organize around "sensitive areas" rather than "geographic areas"
    - Need flexibility to organize this way
6. Existing info available right now for landscape consideration:
    - Conservation Assessment Index ⇨ Aspect of aquatic needs/existing info (e.g. Wyoming and Colorado Basin)
    - National Fish Habitat/Aquatic Assessment

Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Q/A and Discussion topics

1. Opportunities for early agency/peer review
    - Who decides which data to use? (Use the spotted owl as a case study)
    - Who determines change agents?
        - By national direction...
        - Modified and added to by the AMT and contractor recommendations
        - Should consult program leads under Initiation, Phase 1/Task 1, and finalized Task 4
        - Flexibility increases for 2011 REAs (not the same time constraints associated with ARRA and climate change funding)
        - Define what "change agents" means

- What are the mechanisms to incorporate new information?

2. Availability of info for BLM programs
    - Under discussion
    - Need help from key people and other directorates
3. Use of information for setting programs of work
    - Timing of REA implementation with budget requests for 2012 field workload

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives/Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Q/A and Discussion topics

1. Have LCC steering committees also serving as AMT on REAs (at least cross-pollination
2. LCCs could refine management questions
3. REAs could synthesize info within LCCs
4. LCCs could utilize REA contracting process
5. What is origination of LCC boundaries?
6. When/how are LCCs established?

Suggestions for Federal Partners Meeting

1. Give example of an assessment product that LCCs could use (e.g. Northern Great Basin pilot?)
2. Suggest specific coordination opps for LCC/REAs – at start of meeting – to provide context for discussion
3. More clearly identify and more clearly distinguish REAs/LCCs
4. REA/LCC maps ⇨ Show other land ownerships to help people "find" themselves
5. Presentations with speaker notes
    - Post on SharePoint (internal)
    - External website?

BLM Rapid Ecoregional Assessments:
National Federal Partners Meeting

Capital Hilton, 1001 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20036
September 23, 2010

Participants:
Doug Austen, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*
Sandy Boyce, *U.S. Forest Service*
Teresa Ann Ciapusci, *Bureau of Land Management*
Henry Derrick, *Bureau of Land Management*
Olivia Ferriter, *Office of Policy Analysis*
Larry Fisher, *U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution*
Patrick Gonzalez, *National Park Service*
Travis Haby, *Bureau of Land Management*
Pearce Hardy, *U.S. Geological Survey*
Tim Keough, *Kinsail Corporation*
Dan Lechefsky, *Bureau of Land Management*
Kim Magraw, *Office of Policy Analysis*
Patrick Mahoney, *Bureau of Land Management*
Maggie McCaffrey, *U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution*
Kit Muller, *Bureau of Land Management*
Carolyn Olson, *Natural Resource Conservation Service*
Mark Purdy, *Bureau of Land Management*
Ed Roberson, *Bureau of Land Management*
Barry Rose, *Bureau of Land Management*
Ric Rine, *U.S. Forest Service*
John Vitello, *Bureau of Indian Affairs*

Facilitation Team: Susan Hayman and Adair Muth, EnviroIssues

Welcome and Introductions

Susan Hayman, EnviroIssues facilitator, welcomed meeting participants and asked everyone to introduce themselves and their affiliation. Susan reviewed the agenda and meeting objectives, which included discussing BLM's proposed landscape approach for developing and implementing ecoregional management direction, BLM's rapid ecoregional assessments (REAs) in 2010 and 2011, how BLM REAs can help set up/align BLM programs of work, and how BLM's landscape approach relates to other landscape initiatives.

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Ed Roberson, BLM Assistant Director of Renewable Resources and Planning, thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and said Bob Abbey, BLM Director, would have come if he could. He asked meeting attendees to provide feedback and ideas as they review the materials today, to think about how their agencies are addressing the same challenges, and to think about how they might all work together.

Ed said BLM organized the meeting to brief attendees on two related initiatives important not only to the BLM, but important to the western and national landscape: Rapid Ecoregional Assessments and a proposed landscape approach for managing public lands and resources. He said BLM's purpose with these efforts is to understand environmental conditions and trends and use this information to coordinate landscape management on the ground. Ed said BLM has been evolving in this direction for many years with various efforts, including the Solar Energy Development Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and Healthy Lands Initiative. He said the BLM sees REAS and the proposed landscape approach as building on previous efforts. Ed said that in many cases, federal agencies are already working together in the field, but agencies need to work together at all levels to sustain the health of public lands in the face of invasive species, climate change, fire and other environmental challenges. Ed said the BLM would like to hear about other agencies' efforts addressing these problems and together start to develop a cohesive, government-wide response. Ed said he hopes that this is the beginning of a continuing dialogue.

BLM's Landscape Approach for Developing and Implementing Ecoregional Management Direction

Kit Muller, BLM Strategic Planner, thanked everyone for coming and began a PowerPoint presentation titled "Rapid Ecoregional Assessments and a Proposed Landscape Approach for Managing Public Lands." He said he would give a brief introduction of each of these two efforts initiated by BLM and then talk about why the BLM is doing this, how they will integrate it, next steps, and the work plan for 2011. He commented that both REAs and the landscape approach are works-in-progress. Kit asked meeting participants to share any thoughts on how BLM can do things better or differently.

The BLM has initiated seven REAs this year covering a total of 355 million acres and are planning an additional four assessments next year. REAs are a synthesis of existing information about natural resource conditions and trends within an ecoregion. REAs look at three sets of terrestrial values and cover all lands, public and private, within a given assessment. The REAS contracted this year focus on biological values, but the BLM is beginning to explore how to address the human dimension as part of the assessments.

REAs are the first step in what the BLM is calling a "landscape approach" for managing public lands and they are being conducted in cooperation with other state and federal agencies. The BLM is initiating this landscape approach because the management issues they face today including fire, climate change, invasive species and development, transcend the traditional boundaries in the Bureau and field offices.

Historically, BLM funding has been driven by specific projects at a very fine scale. These issues need to be addressed on multiple scales and a landscape approach can help the BLM and others understand and address these widespread environmental changes.

In budget submissions to congress, these initiatives are under the umbrella of climate change. The BLM is under tremendous pressure to develop renewable energy on public lands. As an agency, they do not want to approach this development project by project, as was done in the previous administration for oil and gas. That method of development nearly resulted in the sage-grouse being listed as an endangered species. BLM wants to have a more staged, zoned approach to developing renewable resources; and while authorizing energy projects is the urgency within BLM, this approach will also help with managing for other issues, such as invasive species and fire.

The idea of a landscape approach is not new to the BLM; they are building on a foundation of prior landscape-scale management efforts including:

- 1994 Rangeland Reform
- 1996 Northwest Forest Plan
- 2000 Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project
- 2005-2008 Energy Policy Act Assessments of Energy Potential

The BLM went through a significant transition when Jim Caswell became BLM Director in 2007. Caswell previously worked for the U.S. Forest Service during the spotted owl years and warned that the BLM was headed in the same direction with sage-grouse. Caswell said the BLM needed to develop a landscape strategy and encouraged rapid ecoregional assessments. Caswell recognized the importance of transitioning the work to carry through the new administration, and began talking to conservation groups in Washington and worked with the transition team to carry through the change in administration.

In addition to the prior landscape-scale initiatives, the BLM has several efforts underway that may help integrate the landscape approach. These include:

- Solar, wind, geothermal and energy corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements (PEIS)
- Healthy Lands Initiative
- Native Plant Materials Program
- Sage-grouse Strategy
- Assessment, Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) Strategy

Kit recognized that the BLM is not the only organization working on a landscape approach; many federal, state, and non-governmental (NGO) organizations are also pursuing landscape approaches. Kit said that while terminology may vary from agency to agency, they are all moving in the same direction and the BLM is interested in integrating these activities across the bureaus.

The BLM held a workshop in Park City, Utah in June to discuss the need to develop a landscape approach and integrate activities across bureaus. The meeting was primarily BLM managers and program leads, but federal and state agency and representatives from the Western Governors' Association (WGA) also attended. About 100 people participated in the workshop, which was organized around five interrelated components:

1. Rapid Ecoregional Assessments
2. Ecoregional Direction
3. Field Implementation
4. Monitoring for Adaptive Management
5. Science Integration

There are seven REAs underway to assess key ecological values and forecast trends. The **REAs** are works-in-progress and the scope on future REAs may be expanded to include social and cultural values. REAs identify management opportunities for conservation and development and provide information and tools, but do not make decisions or allocations.

Ecoregional direction is a process to step down what is learned from the assessments. Ecoregional direction:

- Is developed through an iterative process with input from BLM staff, partner agencies, stakeholders and Tribes
- Identifies focal areas for conservation and development
- Identifies regional mitigation strategies
- Addresses science and monitoring needs
- Provides framework for field-level coordination

Field implementation is the next step in the landscape approach. Field offices will use the ecoregional direction to:

- Participate in amending BLM's land use plans, where necessary
- Revise and implement mitigation measures for authorized land uses, including Best Management Practices
- Analyze and implement proposed projects and treatments
- Conduct land tenure adjustments
- Perform sub-assessments and monitoring
- Develop budgets that focus and share management resources

Monitoring for adaptive management is part of field implementation and is key to adaptive management. In order to develop conservation and development strategies, and evaluate their effectiveness, the BLM needs the ability to collect, synthesize, and share geospatial information. BLM is

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finalizing the AIM Strategy that will standardize data collection and retrieval so information is comparable over time, and can be readily accessed and shared.

While it appears to be the last step in the landscape approach, **science integration** is ongoing and iterative. The BLM's landscape approach is evolving within the DOI's overall climate change framework, which includes the formation of Climate Change Science Centers (CSCs) and Landscape Conservations Cooperatives (LCCs).

At the workshop in Park City, the five components above were explored and participants reached some key points of consensus:

- This is the right thing to do – keep moving forward
- All BLM programs must be involved, not just planning and renewable resources
- There is a need for more internal communication about these projects

Workshop participants also identified several points that need more discussion and work:

- Define the step-down process and clarify how it will be developed
- Integrate the landscape approach with existing programs and processes
- Develop a strategic approach for interagency coordination
- Address concerns about the duplication of efforts, as well as capacity issues, particularly for state agencies

Kit said based on the recommendations from the workshop, and the ongoing work with the assessments, the following is planned for 2010-2011:

- Proceed with the seven assessments initiated this year
- Document and discuss "lessons learned" from previous landscape efforts, including hosting two workshops to share and validate these lessons learned
- Develop step-down process, using the lessons learned, and convene three regional BLM meetings to refine the step-down process. Meetings will be held in the Wyoming Basin, Northern Great Basin, and Chihuahuan Desert regions, where partial assessments have been completed.
- Initiate communication and outreach
- Continue interagency dialogue and develop a strategic approach for coordination

Questions/Comments

Q: How does this effort dovetail with the vulnerability assessments that the Deputy Secretary has asked for? Is there an opportunity to also assess vulnerability as part of the REAs?

Dan Lechefsky: *As part of this first round of assessments, we have taken some of the available money and used that to attain west-wide, climate information. We will use that information, and*

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The NatureServe Climate Change Vulnerability Index, to do rudimentary vulnerability assessments for species and ecological attributes for each of the seven ecoregions.

Q: You mentioned working with NRCS to also look at private lands – are you going to incorporate tribal and other private lands?

Kit Muller: *Yes, the assessments cover all lands, not just BLM lands.*

Q: NRCS has ecological sites and surveys, along with soils surveys that encompass your present and planned assessment areas. Are you coordinating with state conservationists about where these ecological studies are going on?

Kit Muller: *Yes.*

C: Thank you and BLM for putting this together, it is useful to help us understand where you are going. USFWS would like to work with everyone to figure out how we can all work together. I think LCCs are a concept that can help tie this all together.

C: Pilot programs underway in the Colorado Plateau and Upper Colorado Basin are examples of partnering between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) and University of Northern Colorado.

C: The use of LCCs to develop shared ownership of science and management linkages is important.

Q: It is encouraging to see this direction from the ground-based management questions in your table, specifically regarding vulnerability. My question is that a lot of management is really hydrologic regimes, which requires reconciliation of data sets. How do you plan on addressing multiple threats and different vulnerabilities?

Travis Haby: *We recognize that when we look at the products that come out of these assessments, we will have to investigate ways to deal with that. We are strong on the idea of ecological integrity, which ties back well to our land health standards at the site level. We do need to address how to expand that to a larger scale, and recognize that we may need help with this issue.*

Kit Muller: *The management questions in the table are generic; in each region they are refined to that specific region. These questions give you a sense of the framework data and change agents that we are looking at. The assessments are grounded in the same template.*

BLM's Rapid Ecoregional Assessment (REA) Program for 2010-2011

Teresa Ann Ciapusci, BLM National Operations Center Branch Chief, gave a PowerPoint presentation titled "Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Step 1 of BLM's Landscape Approach." She said the assessments started a little over a year ago and seven assessments are currently underway. Teresa Ann said that BLM's landscape approach is really a continuous, interactive cycle that enables management to assess,

revise, and adapt over time. One factor in the landscape approach process is the Rapid Ecoregional Assessments. REAs assess the status of key ecoregional values, forecast trends, identify management opportunities, and provide information and tools. REAs do not make decisions or allocations.

REAs include the Western States and Alaska and encompass all ownerships, not just BLM lands. The extent is based on the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) Level III ecoregions and combinations. The assessments initiated this year are:

- Central Basin and Range
- Colorado Plateaus
- Mojave Basin and Range
- Sonoran Desert
- Middle Rockies
- Northwestern Great Plains
- Northwestern Glaciated Plains

The assessments proposed for 2011 are:

- Snake River Plain
- Wyoming Basin
- Northern Basin and Range
- Chihuahuan Desert

REA fundamentals:

- REAs are intended as a way to approach assessments across all lands consistently
- The acronym starts with "rapid," which is intended to be an 18-month process, from the start of the contract to final documents
- REAs use only available information – no new research or data is being collected
- The BLM is seeking interagency participation for conducting the REAs
- The first REAs will be completed in spring 2012
- REAs are being managed under an IDIQ (indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity) contract supervised by the BLM, with four contractors named under the contract
- The assessments will be appropriately peer reviewed; BLM has contracted with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to review the science portion of the documents
- There will be opportunities for public involvement in the REA process, and a website is currently under development

The basic REA components are management questions, conceptual models, conservation elements, change agents, and ecological integrity. Management questions drive the ecoregional assessment and are designed by the local management team to address the issues managers are facing. They are designed to help clarify data gathering and data analysis, and designed to screen out irrelevant data. The REAs this year were funded through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and Climate Change funds. The four assessments underway under ARRA funding had limited scoped with no flexibility to expand the scope, but other assessments in the future may be able to expand the scope if needed.

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Conceptual models are another basic component of the REAs and each REA will likely have one or two conceptual models developed as part of the assessment. Each assessment will also have various conservation element classes. At a minimum, these include: native fish, wildlife, or plants of regional concern; regionally-important ecological features, functions, or services – both terrestrial and aquatic. Additionally, each assessment will consider change agents, including wildland fire, invasive species, development (energy, urban, other), and climate change.

The last component of the assessments is ecological integrity. The assessments look at integrity features in terms of aquatic ecological features, terrestrial ecological features, and native flora and fauna.

The contract process is an open IDIQ contract. There are seven tasks per assessment and the Assessment Management Team (AMT) oversees each task and phase. Peer review of appropriate tasks is conducted and final products will be shared. Teresa Ann presented a slide showing the phases and organizational structure of the contract. The BLM has been completing the tasks under the initiation phase and contracting out the tasks under Phases I and II.

Some of the partnering opportunities in each phase of the contract include:

- *Initiation phase*
    - Participate on assessment management or technical team
    - Define preliminary management questions
    - Identify common landscape issues
    - Prepare assessment work plan
- *Phase I*
    - Refine management questions
    - Suggest conservation elements
    - Suggest change agents
    - Recommend potential data sets
    - Recommend methods and models
    - Provide technical review
    - Participate in peer review
- *Phase II*
    - Provide available data
    - Provide technical review
    - Participate in peer review

Data management is an important aspect of the assessments, and the BLM is considering four aspects of data: Objectives, components, data standards, and data portal.

- Objectives:
    - Facilitate compatibility and continuity of datasets
    - Ensure easy access to most information
- Components:
    - Data management plan
    - Data quality evaluation criteria

- Data Standards:
  - Establish data standards
  - Ensure appropriate safeguards for confidential information

- Data Portal:
  - Provide centralized access to data and information
  - Handles large volumes of data

The outcomes of the Rapid Ecological Assessments will be: A common baseline of information, conceptual models and other decision support tools, identified data gaps and research needs, and a shared understand of management opportunities and constraints.

Questions/Comments

Q: Are REAs one-time assessments?

Teresa Ann: *REAs are intended to be living documents, there are the initial assessments and then we hope to refresh the data every three years.*

C: From the perspective of the USGS and Climate Science Centers, these assessments are going to be very important. Perhaps we can coordinate with BLM and contribute funding to keep the assessments up-to-date.

Q: State agencies do not have enough capacity – time, people or infrastructure. On a related note, data is coming in for the assessments and then the "pipeline" of incoming data will close for three to five years. How will you keep the pipeline open to keep data coming in?

Kit Muller: *That is an issue we are very anxious to discuss with all agencies. We would like to have some way to refresh these assessments. Managing large sets of data is not BLM's forte, we are on-the-ground managers, and so we are looking for suggestions and help from other agencies.*

Travis Haby: *The "pipeline" does shut down, so the assessments are snapshots of time. With the data portal we will put that information out in static form and then have a web-based form for people to modify those data layers.*

Q: Conceptual models seem to be an important step in the assessments. Can you elaborate on the conceptual models and how you will analyze the data to predict future trends?

Travis Haby: *We will start with three things: status, risk (or change agents) and opportunity. Managers are uncomfortable with REAs providing recommendations and identifying opportunities, so the REAs will provide an assessment of the status relative to past status. We will be able to display that, integrate conservation elements into grain size, and integrate ecological integrity. We will then take the change agents and have the contractors try to predict different scenarios for potential future status, given the current status. The REAs will give a range of scenarios.*

Teresa Ann Ciapusci: *The REAs will not go as far as to identify desired conditions; managers will make that decision. The REAs will inform the decision-making process – we do not want to get into allocation or decision-making and have to get involved in the NEPA process.*

Q: The LANDFIRE Program has collected a lot of data across boundaries, and additionally, the Indian Forest Lands have extensive databases. Are you using those data sources?

Teresa Ann Ciapusci: *All of the LANDFIRE datasets are included in the REAs. If you know of other specific datasets that you think we might not be aware of, please share them with Travis.*

Q: Will you talk more about the process to identify research needs?

Teresa Ann Ciapusci: *We want to identify if there is a gap in the science or data, but currently the contract is not designed to determine how to get those filled. The contract we have with USGS will help inform those research needs. Additionally, contractors may not be able to find data, and in that manner are identifying data gaps.*

Travis Haby: *We are working with Zac Bowen with USGS in Fort Collins to take the identified data gaps and formulate those into a data needs catalogue to shop around and see if anyone is doing any research to fill those gaps or is interested in doing the research.*

Q: Can you describe in more detail how the management questions are defined, and specifically, the opportunity for public and stakeholder input?

Kit Muller: *The management questions in the table were developed from BLM internal discussions about what some of the ecological values and change agents are that we want to look at in the assessments, both at the regional and national scale. We tried to synthesize those discussions with this table. The table is only a starting point for the REAs. Within each ecoregion, the first task of the contractors is to work with the Assessment Management Team to refine those questions. As the contractors complete different products, we will put that information on the website.*

Barry Rose: *We will post the documents on the website and allow time for the public to look them and give us feedback. This will be the key opportunity for public input. We will also provide the opportunity for the public to provide data. We will not have a public comment period for the various documents because we consider them science documents.*

Q: There is public involvement and there is *meaningful* public involvement. I think to make it meaningful you need to involve the public early. I see value in involving the public during the development of management questions.

Barry Rose: *Structuring public input into the management questions is difficult because of the short 18-month timeframe.*

Q: Have you thought about compiling data at the national scale and then having the data management teams look at that data? It might be more efficient to compile data at the national scale.

Kit Muller: *Yes, we have considered that, and for certain data layers it makes sense because there are national data layers, but for others they don't exist. The data layers vary from region to region, depending on the data you are talking about. In some areas we are creating west-wide data layers.*

Q: The USGS has a center in South Dakota that is charged with doing that type of work (creating national data layers). It seems a natural way to make this process more effective.

Travis Haby: *We know there are some datasets that we will want nation-wide and the best-case scenario is we would get those data layers at one time. However, much of the resource data we need is from the states.*

Kit Muller: *One challenge we need to address is the capacity of states to manage this data. We need to establish trust and provide states support to create that "pipeline" of flow for information back and forth. This is an opportunity for federal agencies to come together and invest in and create partnerships with the states.*

Q: Do you think the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Congress would focus Land and Water Conservation Funds to establishing that partnership with states for data?

Kit Muller: *I don't know specifically about the Land and Water Conservation Fund but for the 2012 budget, we should have this discussion.*

Q: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is willing to push the idea of developing state partnerships for data. Most state fish and wildlife agencies get 25% of their funding so there are obvious linkages.

Kit Muller: *The Western Governors' Association (WGA) has volunteered to convene a meeting with state fish and game agencies to discuss data sharing in November. This may be a useful discussion to have at that meeting. Maybe there could be something in the 2012 Climate Change budget for this also.*

Potential to Coordinate REAs and Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) Needs

Dan Lechefsky, BLM National Climate Change Coordinator, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the potential to coordinate REAs and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). Dan said he first wanted to introduce the REAs and then explore the potential of integrating LCCs and REAs. Dan said that the Department of Interior is promoting the LCCs, as well as eight regional Climate Science Centers (CSCs). Together the LCCs and CSCs form integrated networks for science and to apply that science. There has been concern from states about the LCCs and REAs duplicating efforts but from BLM's perspective, the REAs will provide useful information to the CSCs and LCCs.

LCCs are a network of 22 applied conservation science partnerships coordinated by Doug Austen and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The CSCs are being coordinated by the U.S. Geological Survey and will provide scientific information to managers. The LCCs take information from the CSCs, NOAA and other

places, use that information and apply it to solve conservation problems through partnerships. LCCs are self-directed partnership organizations formed within very large landscapes and include federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, tribes and other landowners.

Since LCCs cover large portions of the landscape, they will involve multiple states and multiple ecoregions. Ecoregions are more or less nested within LCCs and all of the western states involve multiple LCCs. There is a wide variety of ownerships and agency jurisdictions across the western LCCs.

LCCs do four things:

- Address shared priorities and goals
- Leverage resources
- Link science and conservation delivery
- Enable effective conservation action

Dan showed a series of slides demonstrating that various partners may be involved in multiple LCCs, but not all partners within an LCC may want to be involved in every project that LCC is involved with. Additionally, states may have numerous LCCs and numerous REAs within their borders. He said his main point is that there will be a tremendous need for coordination among LCCs, REAs and with states.

REAs are management-driven efforts which assemble and synthesize information, and help identify landscape-scale resource values, conditions, needs and opportunities. Dan provided two examples of outputs that might be produced by a REA. Both examples were produced by the pilot assessment in the Northern Great Basin. The first example was a map overlaying sage-grouse occupied habitat with high and low fire potential. The second example was a map overlaying mule deer winter use areas and fire potential.

There are numerous uses for REA outputs:

- Priority setting
- Identifying information gaps/needs
- Conservation design
- Land and resource management planning
- NEPA (cumulative impact analyses)
- Promoting partnerships and dialogue
- Interpretation and education

Dan presented a slide comparing LCCs with REAs. He said LCCs are partnership organizations that need landscape-scale information to be fully effective. REA areas nest within LCCs and result in landscape-scale information intended for conservation applications through partnerships. Dan said the question is: can we do more to coordinate the two? Can REA outputs, or at least methodology, be adapted for use by LCCs and is this something we would like to promote for LCCs as a whole?

Options for REA/LCC coordination:

- No systematic coordination
- LCCs sponsor and coordinate
- LCCs provide input on management questions and best available information
- LCCs provide input on new start priorities
- Complete REAs for one LCC
- Complete pre-assessments pre-wide

Questions/Comments

C: From the USGS and the Climate Science Center perspective, we are hoping that LCCs will identify needs to then adapt resource management.

C: I am glad to see you are doing this in a systematic way with documentation and the IDIQ contracts. I think you should look at how you might have a more coordinated approach with the OMB and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) initiative on ecosystem services. The REA and LCC work might help inform that endeavor.

Q: Is there a way we can design the integration of LCCs and REAs to enhance state involvement?

> Dan Lechefksy: *LCCs are intended to be that partnership that over time will improve and cement those relationships with states. The challenge is to be clear about the distinction between REAs and LCCs: One is information, one is an organization.*

C: I think that REAs informing LCCs is the way to think about this. All LCCs are evolving to be part of a fully functional network. We need to decide the tools that we want to have across the network to create some consistency. While lines are nice on a map, they do not mean anything to species and other things that transcend those boundaries. Thank you for brining people to the table to talk about this, I think this does go back to the issue of how to equip states to move along at the same speed as federal agencies.

C: You presented some options for coordination. I think on one hand, citing 2011 REAs to complete an entire LCC makes sense. On the other hand, it may make more sense to concentrate where BLM has the most experience. An additional observation is that because of where the polygons are drawn, there are areas that are in an LCC but not covered in an ecoregion.

Q: Can you talk about the plan to use down-scaled climate change data in the REAs?

Dan Lechefsky: *We are getting west-wide data from USGS in Corvallis. The data covers most of the public land in the public land states, but does not include Alaska. I can get you more information if you are interested.*

C: The USFS is revising the Planning Rule process and a lot of the discussion here today resonates with what we have been doing. The Planning Rule will have broader scale monitoring components, including requirements for a large scale monitoring strategy. The Forest Service is looking at an "all lands approach," as something we will be building into the Rule, including social, economic and ecological elements. It seems like there is some chemistry between what BLM and the USFS are doing and we need to find the right catalyst to bring this together. I think there are opportunities to have more continuous meetings like this among the different agencies and move forward collectively.

Next steps and closing remarks

Kit Muller asked meeting attendees if there was an interest in additional information-sharing about their collective landscape initiatives. He suggested that it would be useful to have each agency take half a day and put together a presentation about what they are doing. He said it would help them think about how to integrate these efforts and allow them to begin to develop a path for bringing the efforts together.

Suggestions and comments:

- Task Force Work Group on CSC/LCC chaired by Tom Armstrong could sponsor the workshop(s)
- Sub-working group under the Secretaries Energy and Climate Change Task Force could sponsor the workshop(s)
- Invite WAFWA to present also
- Need to determine the right level of folks to invite (SCUNC Works or Director level?)
- Use meeting minutes for outreach
- Create cross-walk of different agencies activities

Kit asked meeting attendees if they would be interested in systematic coordination when initially setting up the process. Kit asked if participants thought they should establish national technical management and assessment management teams, similar to the teams established in each region for the REAs. Kit said they could establish the national teams and invite national partners to join to help with the REAs.

Comments:

- The LCC network is talking about coordinating a Governing Board to address the continuity of LCCs. One of their charges is to look for consistency, tools and approaches. They should look at REAs and see how to encourage LCCs to use them, so they might be sounding board to take this.

- Climate Change Data Integration Work Group is another entity that may be able to reflect on how REAs are progressing

Other ideas/follow-up items:

- Doug Austen volunteered to coordinate a webinar with the western LCCs to introduce them to REAs and begin the conversation, rather than at the upcoming national LCC meeting in Shepherdstown
- If the BLM decides to hold a similar meeting in Colorado for federal partners, expand the agenda to allow partners time to also present what they are doing
- Talk to "Skunkworks" about supporting the state/federal partnership and providing capacity to states
- Hold a science fair with other agencies at the end of Task 3 in the REA contracts to talk about models

Kit thanked everyone for taking the time to come to the meeting and for their feedback.

List of handouts

1. Agenda
2. Handout copy of PowerPoint Presentations
3. Map of Rapid Ecoregional Assessments
4. Map of Western Landscape Conservation Cooperatives
5. Map of LCCs with Nested REAs
6. The BLM's Landscape Approach for Managing Public Lands: Overview
7. The BLM's Landscape Approach for Managing Public Lands: Questions & Answers
8. An Introduction to Rapid Ecoregional Assessments
9. Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Questions and Answers
10. Matrix: Where are Areas with High Conservation and Restoration Potential and Areas with High Development Potential?

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Transcribed Flip Chart Notes
BLM-REA Federal Partners Meeting, September 23, 2010

Landscape Approach: Q/A and Discussion topics

1. How this effort dovetails with "vulnerability" assessments
2. Assessments – coverage of lands...all ownerships
3. NRCS – undertaking similar assessment (ecological studies) – coordinate with State Conservationists
4. NOAA and UNC – RE: Pilot programs in Colorado Plateau/Upper Colorado Basin
5. Use of LCCs ⇨ Shared "ownership"/science and management linkages important
6. Mgt questions ⇨ Encouraging
   - Process related
   - Challenges for data resolution

Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Q/A and Discussion topics

1. REAs ⇨ "Living" document; intent to "refresh"
   - Info important to CSCs
   - Important interagency effort to keep current
2. Issue of capacity (e.g. states)
   - How to keep "info pipeline" open?
   - One data set "static," plus updatable web-based data
3. Analysis of baseline data – beyond compilation of data
   - Status, risk (change agents), opportunity
4. Making use of LANDFIRE data? This info would be useful to contractors
5. Using tribal data (fixed plots, etc. over time): Info useful to contractors
6. Defining research needs; rather, identify data gaps
7. Role of USGS in identifying data gaps and looking for related research opps.
8. How mgt questions are defined ⇨ mgt and public processes to influence these
9. "Meaningful" public involvement (early, etc.) ⇨ Opps for mgt questions
10. Data sets:
    - Seems it would be more efficient to have data at national scale and analysis at ecoregional scale
    - There will be some USGS generated "west-wide" data sets

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11. State resource data ⇨ challenges
    - Capacity of states to get legacy data in shape to use
    - Trust to responsibly use this data
    - Funding/investment to states
    - Develop partnership with states
    - Opp to focus LWCF funding on state partnership issues (?)

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives/Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Q/A and Discussion topics

1. LCCs primary partners with CSC; CSC hope LCCs will identify research needed
2. Glad to see systematic coordination. LCCs/CSCs at different stages of developments. Look at gov't wide approach to ecosystem services
3. Challenges with involvement of states; Can LCCs/REAs be a mechanism/method to enhance coordination/partnership with states/feds?
    - Also need to think about resources/issues that cross boundaries
    - Opp to work across lines to benefit all, including states
4. Siting REAs to get wall-to-wall coverage makes sense, but may compete with where the info is most needed (e.g. Wyoming basin)
5. Note: Areas within LCCs that aren't currently in REAs; Can lines be "redrawn" to include?
6. Use of climate change data in REAs (Status? Process?)

Interest in Info-Sharing

1. Yes
2. Secretary's Energy and Climate Change Taskforce
    - CSC/LCC Executive Team
        - Skunkworks -- Potential convener
3. Would support BLM providing catalyst for getting this meeting underway
4. Produce summary to share
5. Include states/WAFWA
6. Meeting product?
    - Info sharing summary
    - "Crosswalk" that shows relationship
    - Example of successful processes
    - Then...share with leadership

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Systematic Coordination - REAs

1. National management team?
2. National technical team?
3. Invite fed/state partners?
4. Would need to figure the relationship of this/these "teams" with other DOI, etc. teams
    - E.g. LCC "team"/climate change data integration
    - May be great link with CSC
    - Useful across Departments

Follow Up

1. Process to "refresh" REA data ⇨ Interagency
2. Use of LWCF (or other funds) to help support state/fed partnerships (***Skunkworks follow up***)
3. 2012 priorities for REAs (discussion topic at LCC meeting in Shepherdstown?)
4. Coordinate webinar with LCCs on REAs/relationships/priorities (instead of Shepherdstown meeting?): ***Doug and Kit to follow up on this***
5. Use opp to meet in Colorado to meeting to discuss same topics, plus add time to share what other fed agencies are doing in this regard

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BLM Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Lessons Learned Workshop November 29-30, 2010

Embassy Suites, Denver International Airport
7001 Yampa Street, Denver, CO 80249

The purpose of this meeting is to:

1. Develop a shared understanding of lessons learned in landscape scale assessment/planning processes and management based on the ***Lessons Learned Report – Ecoregional Assessment Processes*** (2010) and participants' own experiences;
2. Examine the implications of these lessons learned for the development of future assessments and ecoregional direction/step-down processes;
3. Provide input to improve future rapid ecoregional assessment processes;
4. Provide input to inform the development of ecoregional direction/step-down processes.

Monday, November 29

1:00 p.m.	**Welcome, Introductions and Meeting Overview**	Susan Hayman, Facilitator
1:30 p.m.	**BLM's Landscape Approach** ▪ BLMS's landscape approach and your role in helping to make it meaningful	Kit Muller, Strategic Planner, BLM
2:00 p.m.	**Lessons Learned Report – Key Findings** ▪ An overview of the key findings	Maggie McCaffrey, Co-Author, U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution
2:15 p.m.	**Lessons Learned with Landscape Scale Assessment & Planning** ▪ Small group discussion □ Response to the Lessons Learned Report □ Personal experiences	Facilitated Small Group Discussion
3:15 p.m.	BREAK	

3:30 p.m.	**Lessons Learned with Landscape Scale Assessment & Planning Processes , cont'd** ▪ Small group reports and full group discussion	Facilitated Discussion
4:15 p.m.	**Implications** ▪ What are the implications of these lessons learned for improving the assessment process? ▪ What are the implications of these lessons learned for developing ecoregional direction/step-down processes?	Facilitated Discussion
4:55 p.m.	Wrap up and Day 2 Overview	Kit Muller

Tuesday, November 30

8:00 a.m.	Recap of Day 1	Kit Muller Susan Hayman
8:30 a.m.	***Review of Implications*** Rapid Ecoregional Assessment Process ▪ How can we improve the process for future REAs?	Facilitated Discussion
9:45 a.m.	BREAK	
10:00 a.m.	***Review of Implications*** Ecoregional Direction/Step-down Process Development ▪ What elements would you expect ecoregional direction/step-down processes to include?	Facilitated Discussion
11:30 a.m.	Wrap up and Review Next Steps	Susan Hayman Kit Muller
12:00 p.m.	ADJOURN	

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Capacity	Experience and training of resource staff is important for successful implementation; NEPA, RMPs, applications for uses
	Need to articulate staff roles and responsibilities to successfully implement
	Need to define the role of the specialists in the REA/Landscape Approach process
	Need to invest in staff (not necessarily "new" staff)
Communication	A lot of education of internal staff is missing in the REA process (ex: resource specialist level)
	Avoid use of "education" – term itself
Data	It is naïve for us to infer "trends" or "status" using spatial data with less than 50% accuracy
	Disclose the data quality and availability.
Implementation	REAs should be informational not decisional
	Regional interagency teams can perpetuate tensions between regulatory and land management agencies
	Regional teams can be a bottleneck in implementation
	Senior scientists shouldn't develop management direction (i.e.. Founding Fathers concept)
	Work processes are, in some cases, non-existent, rather than simply in need of change
Interface between science and management	A blend of managers and scientists need to shape the assessment questions
	Science products need to be used by/useful to managers
	Senior scientists won't engage in collaborating and developing questions with managers and other stakeholders.
Leadership	Lack of leadership is creating the impression that this is just another short-lived initiative, rather than a new way of doing business
	National leadership is missing from the REA process
Other	Need to emphasize equally both process and product. "Product" shows the process is worthwhile
Partnering	Need greater awareness and emphasis on relationships, for example state and federal agencies, e.g. wildlife

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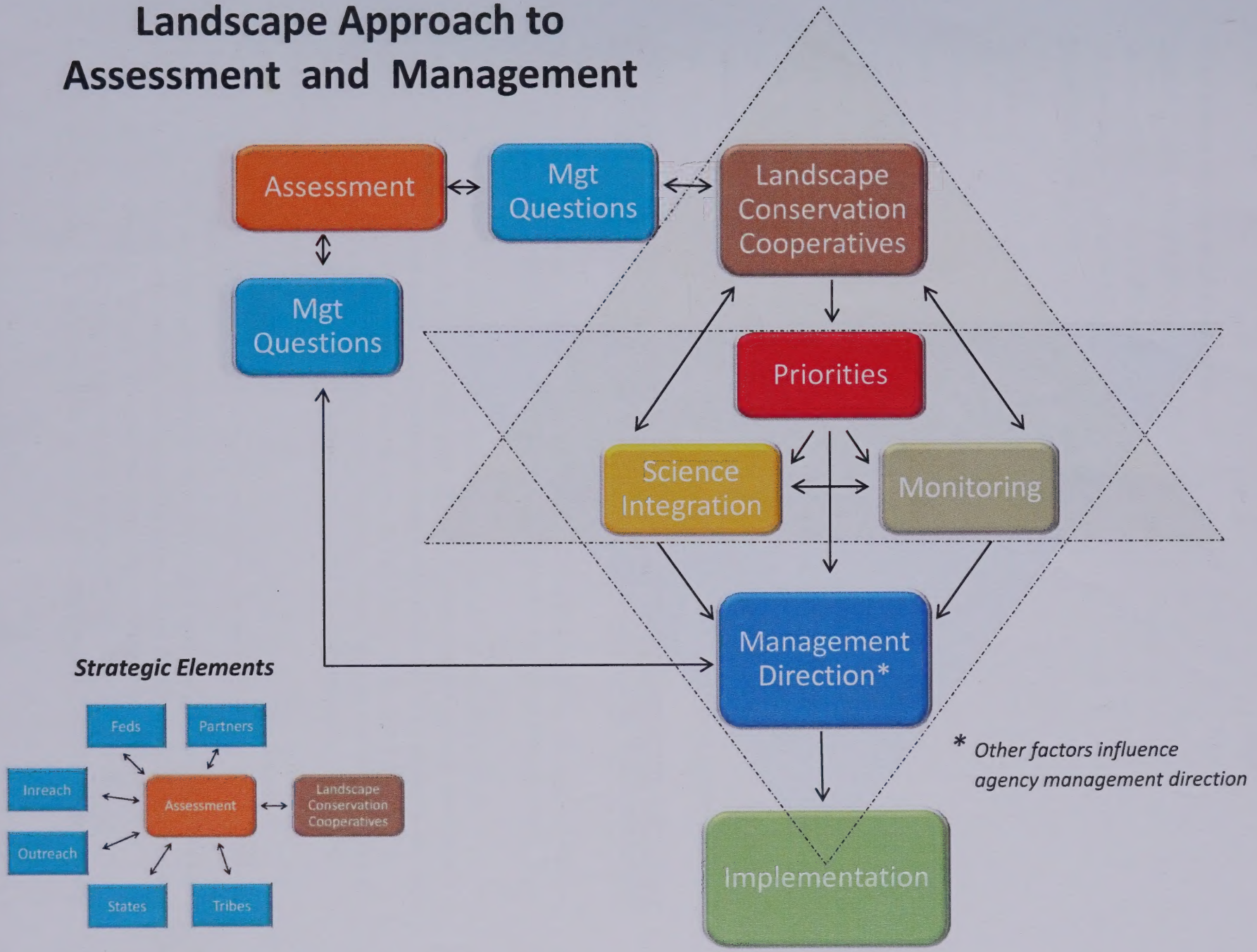
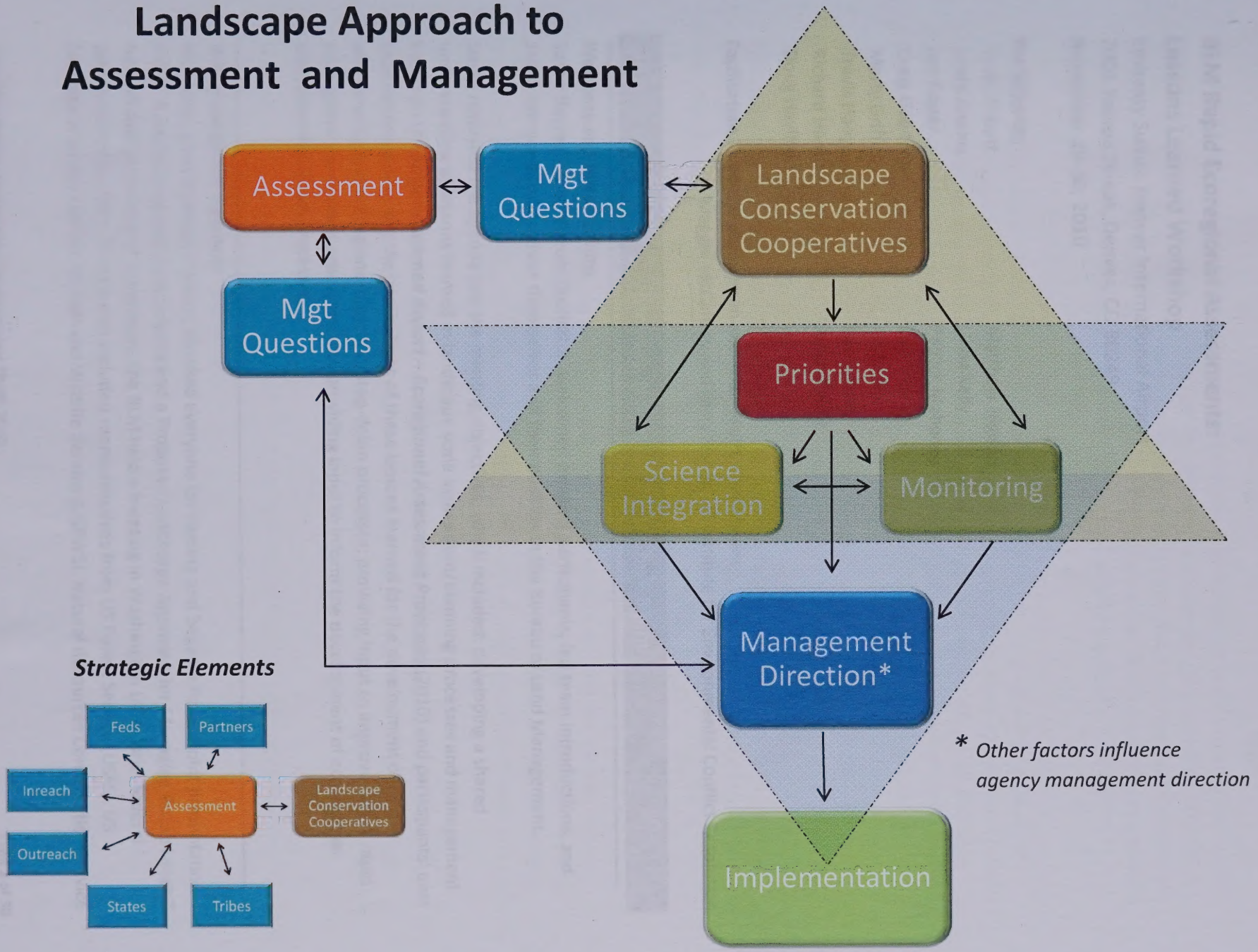
Program Integration	Need to articulate the effect on the field – what will/should this mean to them?
	Program integration (substance and budget) is critical to effecting real change
Public Process	Building trust and ownership with the public can be difficult within the short timeframe of REAs
	Collaboration will change the way we do business in the future (ex: alternatives for Sage-grouse Plan Amendment)
	Need to develop collaborative process to address changing participants
	Scientists generally resist being involved in public processes
Purpose of REAs	Need to clearly articulate the value of REAs beyond just developing RMPs i.e. Implementation and maintenance
	Not sure that REAs are necessary
Science	Credibility should be based on the quality of work, not just the "names" of scientists
	Peer review should be conducted by people with relevant expertise.
	REAs defined by issue vs. geography pose different science and public participation challenges
	REAS should not set a false expectation for restoration
	There are no "independent" scientists - this notion devalues our own specialists
	There needs to be some ability to customize individual REAs, but there needs to be some consistent framework

Landscape Approach to Assessment and Management



Landscape Approach to Assessment and Management



BLM Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Lessons Learned Workshop

Embassy Suites, Denver International Airport
7001 Yampa Street, Denver, CO 80249
November 29-30, 2010

Participants:

Tyler Abbott	Matthew Higdon
Linda Anania	Linda Kelly
Jon Foster	Patrick Mahoney
Craig Goodwin	Bob Means
Marty Griffith	Kit Muller
Travis Haby	Barry Rose
Richard Hardt	Jason Taylor
Doug Havlina	

Facilitation Team: Susan Hayman and Adair Muth, EnviroIssues
Maggie McCaffrey and Larry Fisher, US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution

Monday, November 29, 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

Susan Hayman, EnviroIssues facilitator, welcomed meeting participants, led team introductions, and asked everyone to introduce themselves and their position in the Bureau of Land Management.

Susan reviewed the agenda and the meeting objectives, which included: developing a shared understanding of lessons learned in landscape scale assessment/planning processes and management based on the ***Lessons Learned Report – Ecoregional Assessment Processes*** (2010) and participants' own experiences; examining the implications of these lessons learned for the development of future assessments and ecoregional direction/step-down processes; providing input to improve future rapid ecoregional assessment processes; and providing input to inform the development of ecoregional direction/step-down processes.

BLM's Landscape Approach

Kit Muller, BLM Strategic Planner, thanked everyone for coming and began a PowerPoint presentation titled "Rapid Ecoregional Assessments and a Proposed Landscape Approach for Managing Public Lands." He said that at the end of September, the BLM held a meeting in Washington DC to brief federal partners on this effort. Participants included representatives from US Forest Service (USFS), US Geological Survey (USGS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service

(NRCS) and National Park Service (NPS). He noted that this presentation was very similar to the one he gave at that meeting. He said his presentation was followed by a more detailed presentation on Rapid Ecoregional Assessments (REAs) by Teresa Ann Ciapusci and a presentation on the relationship between Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) and REAs by Dan Lechefsky. Federal partners were pleased with the meeting and it was decided that a follow-up meeting would be organized to continue discussions.

The BLM has initiated seven Rapid Ecoregional Assessments (REAs) this year covering a total of 355 million acres and are planning an additional four assessments next year. REAs are a synthesis of existing information about natural resource conditions and trends within an ecoregion. REAs look at change agents and cover all lands, public and private, within a given assessment. The initial assessments were started with Recovery Act Funding and resulted from the immediate pressure to develop energy.

There is a Department of Interior (DOI) working group that is focusing on climate change. Within the climate change working group, there are two foci: one group focuses on observations and one group focuses on data management. Kit mentioned that eight Climate Science Centers (CSCs) and 21 Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) are also being stood up across the country. Kit said the coordination and horizontal and vertical communications with these entities as well as state, federal, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) is going to be crucial.

REAs are the first step in what the BLM is calling a "landscape approach" for managing public lands and they are being conducted in cooperation with other state and federal agencies. The BLM is initiating this landscape approach because the management issues they face today including fire, climate change, invasive species and development, transcend the traditional boundaries in the Bureau and field offices. Historically, BLM funding has been driven by specific projects at a very fine scale. These issues need to be addressed on multiple scales and a landscape approach can help the BLM and others understand and address these widespread environmental changes.

Kit said a landscape approach examines landscape-scale resource conditions and trends, identifies focal areas for conservation and development, focuses resources where they are most needed, integrates BLM management activities, enables adaptive management, and provides a foundation for management partnerships.

The idea of a landscape approach is not new to the BLM; they are building on a foundation of prior landscape-scale management efforts including:

- 1994 Rangeland Reform
- 1996 Northwest Forest Plan
- 2000 Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project
- 2005-2008 Energy Policy Act Assessments
- 2007-2009 Sage-grouse Habitat Assessment

The BLM went through a significant transition when Jim Caswell became BLM Director in 2007. Caswell previously worked for the U.S. Forest Service during the spotted owl years and warned that the BLM was headed in the same direction with sage-grouse. Caswell said the BLM needed to develop a landscape strategy and encouraged rapid ecoregional assessments. The Great Basin was chosen as the pilot project for the assessments.

In addition to the prior landscape-scale initiatives, the BLM has several efforts underway that may help integrate the landscape approach. These include:

- Solar PEISs
- Healthy Lands Initiative
- Native Plant Materials
- Sage-grouse Strategy
- Monitoring Strategy

Kit recognized that the BLM is not the only organization working on a landscape approach; many federal, state, and non-governmental organizations are also pursuing landscape approaches. Kit said that while terminology may vary from agency to agency, they are all moving in the same direction and the BLM is interested in integrating these activities across the bureaus. He mentioned that the Healthy Lands Initiative started as a way to pool funding to focus money on the ground and now there are statewide funding pools in five states. Kit said BLM has also been working with the Western Governors' Association (WGA) to look at how to integrate various initiatives and activities. Kit also mentioned that the Great Northern LCC is looking at integrating the REAs, USFS vulnerability assessments, and decision-support tools being developed in Idaho and Montana.

Kit said that at the federal partners meeting in September, they discussed the possibility of organizing a meeting in Ft. Collins, CO to meet with regional representatives to talk about BLM and other agencies' landscape-scale efforts. Travis Haby is working with Zack Bowen, USGS, to plan that meeting. The objective is to create a cross-walk to identify similarities and differences between the various agences' initiatives and projects.

The BLM held a workshop in Park City, Utah in June 2010 to discuss the need to develop a landscape approach and integrate activities across bureaus. The meeting was primarily BLM managers and program leads, but federal and state agency and representatives from WGA also attended. About 100 people participated in the workshop, which was organized around five interrelated components:

1. Rapid Ecoregional Assessments
2. Ecoregional Direction
3. Field Implementation
4. Monitoring for Adaptive Management
5. Science Integration

There are seven REAs underway to assess key ecological values and forecast trends. The REAs are works-in-progress and the scope on future REAs may be expanded to include social and cultural values. REAs identify management opportunities for conservation and development and provide information and tools, but do not make decisions or allocations.

Kit showed a map of the seven REAs underway and the four that are anticipated to begin in 2011. The seven underway include: Northwestern Glaciated Plains, Northwester Great Plains, Middle Rockies, Central Basin and Range, Colorado Plateaus, Mojave Basin and Range, and the Sonoran Desert. The four anticipated to begin in 2011 (pending budget decisions) are: Northern Basin and Range, Snake River Plain, Wyoming Basin and Chihuahuan Desert. Kit noted that the first iteration of assessments are work-in-progress and future assessments will be conducted based on lessons learned from the first iteration.

Kit mentioned that at the federal partners meeting, it was asked if LCCs should take on the assessments. Kit said he has been talking with Doug Austen, USFWS and LCC National Coordinator, about organizing a webinar with all of the LCCs to introduce them to the REAs and what BLM is doing.

Kit explained that ecoregional direction is a process to step down what is learned from the assessments. He noted that ecoregional direction still needs further development and BLM will be hosting workshops in spring 2011 to work through this. In general, ecoregional direction:

- Is developed through an iterative process with input from BLM staff, partner agencies, stakeholders and Tribes
- Identifies focal areas for conservation and development
- Identifies regional mitigation strategies
- Addresses science and monitoring needs
- Provides framework for field-level coordination

Field implementation is the next step in the landscape approach. Field offices will use the ecoregional direction to:

- Participate in amending BLM's land use plans, where necessary
- Revise and implement mitigation measures for authorized land uses, including Best Management Practices
- Analyze and implement proposed projects and treatments
- Conduct land tenure adjustments
- Perform sub-assessments and monitoring
- Develop budgets that focus and share management resources

Kit said the best example of field implementation is sage-grouse mapping in the west. The core breeding area map has been completed west-wide and is in the process of being validated. This map will help identify appropriate areas for oil, gas and renewable energy development and Best Management Practices (BMPs) may be developed in these areas.

Monitoring for adaptive management is part of field implementation and is key to adaptive management. In order to develop conservation and development strategies, and evaluate their effectiveness, the BLM needs the ability to collect, synthesize, and share geospatial information. BLM is finalizing the Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) Strategy that will standardize data collection and retrieval so information is comparable over time, and can be readily accessed and shared.

While it appears to be the last step in the landscape approach, science integration is ongoing and iterative. The BLM's landscape approach is evolving within the DOI's overall climate change framework, which includes the formation of Climate Change Science Centers and Landscape Conservations Cooperatives.

At the workshop in Park City, the five components above were explored and participants reached some key points of consensus:

- This is the right thing to do – keep moving forward
- All BLM programs must be involved, not just planning and renewable resources
- There is a need for more internal communication about these projects

Workshop participants also identified several points that need more discussion and work:

- Define the step-down process and clarify how it will be developed
- Integrate the landscape approach with existing programs and processes
- Develop a strategic approach for interagency coordination

Kit said based on the recommendations from the workshop, and the ongoing work with the assessments, the following is planned for 2010-2011:

- Proceed with the seven assessments initiated this year
- Document and discuss "lessons learned" from previous landscape efforts, including hosting three workshops to share and validate these lessons learned (this workshop being the first, the second will be with external partners, and the third at the Washington Office with BLM Program Leads)
    - Kit noted that there has been discussion to hold an additional lessons learned workshop specifically on data
- Develop step-down process, using the lessons learned, and convene three regional BLM meetings to refine the step-down process. Meetings will be held in the Wyoming Basin, Northern Great Basin, and Chihuahuan Desert regions, where partial assessments have been completed.
- Initiate communication and outreach
- Continue interagency dialogue and develop a strategic approach for coordination

Questions and comments

- Have you addressed the issue of viability? It is a big issue as related to endangered species. It may not apply to sage-grouse in the short-term, but in the long-term it does because the prediction is that regardless of what we do, sage-grouse habitat is going to shrink.
    - Kit said the US Forest Service is addressing this in their revisions of the Planning Rule.
- Viability is a pivotal question in the Planning Rule because it is a changing landscape. Robin Craig wrote a paper that looks at species viability within the context of climate change. It is a critical question for land management agencies.
    - Robin Craig "Stationary is dead: Long Live Transformation" Florida State University College of Law. http://works.bepress.com/robin_craig/41
- Need to start addressing viability today so we are prepared to respond. It is important that our managers know how we are thinking about climate change and adaptive management. The work force is not as well-informed as they could be to help us move forward with this issue. We are talking about "the way we do business" – we need to bring our work force along in the way we do business.
    - Kit said the real impetus for the BLM moving this forward was not climate change but energy development and other issues, such as invasive species. There is a huge need for internal communication with regard to this. Barry Rose has been working on a website that describes the landscape approach and is currently working on a letter from the Director to BLM employees.
- We need to bring the folks that actually do the work along with us sooner than we have with the planning.
    - Kit said one of the reasons this workshop is important is to start the conversation about scale and how that affects how BLM operates. Each program within BLM operates on a different scale (grazing, for example by allotment) and the implications of each program working at a landscape scale, rather than the scale they have historically used need to be determined. Additionally, BLM has tended to approach issues project by project and assume that mitigation can be done project by project as well. Need to consider the cumulative effects of our actions across the landscape and transition to working at that larger scale.
- Learn from the energy program – they have made significant steps in looking at the bigger picture and acknowledging that conservation issues are driving what we do. The energy program has spent a lot of time working with folks to change philosophies.
- There are two things that drive our work: the way we allocate the budget, and the ways that we measure accomplishment.
- There is a need for a workshop on data. We need to have an understanding of data – that question always comes back from the field (connection between scales, step-down, etc.)

Lessons Learned Report – Key Findings

Maggie McCaffrey, U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (USIECR), and co-author of the Lessons Learned Report, presented a PowerPoint presentation to summarize the findings in the report. Maggie presented the following information:

Primary Focus

1. Exploring lessons learned from other landscape-scale processes to further refine BLM's approach.
2. Testing BLM's assumptions about key factors that contribute to the success of an ecoregional approach.
3. Validating the interview results through a review of relevant literature.

Previous Ecoregional Efforts

The following individuals were interviewed about the plan(s) they were involved in:

- Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP)
  - Christine Anderson, U.S. Forest Service
  - Bob Devlin, U.S. Forest Service
  - Ed Shepard, Bureau of Land Management
- Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Plan (ICBEMP)
  - Susan Gianettino, Bureau of Land Management
  - Ed Shepard, Bureau of Land Management
  - Mike Wisdom, U.S. Forest Service
- Greater Sage-grouse Initiative (GSG)
  - Jack Connelly, Idaho Fish and Game
  - San Stiver, Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Key Lessons Learned

Ecoregional assessments must be (pg. 4 of Lessons Learned Report):

1. Completed by independent senior scientists with strong publication records, with a peer review process to ensure credibility of the science.
2. Informational rather than directive. Scientists should not be decision-makers.
3. Completed within a 12-month to 18-month time frame and focused on synthesizing existing relevant data and information and identifying critical gaps for further research.
4. Approached systematically, with the understanding that initial assessments will be periodically updated to include new science and the adaptive management results.
5. Focused on key ecosystem management questions that are grounded in clear management goals and objectives.

6. Involve managers, resource specialists, partners and stakeholders in a collaborative process to identify key issues, set management objectives, frame the management questions, evaluate and refine data, and assess the utility of the information for decision-making.
7. Grounded in science and include conceptual models linked to system attributes and key change agents. The models should be able to capture and address the dynamism and fluidity of the ecosystem at multiple temporal and spatial scales.
8. Appropriately scaled to address the separate, but interrelated boundaries, drivers, and secondary issues related to the major management questions (i.e. wildlife species viability, habitat, invasive species, fire).
9. Focused on process rather than product to develop shared understanding and value for a landscape-scale, ecoregional approach.

Ecoregional direction must be (pg. 4-5 of Lessons Learned Report):

1. Supported at the top levels to ensure coordinated goals, targets and resource allocations across jurisdictions to allow partners to work together.
2. Developed through iterative, interagency and interdisciplinary processes across national, regional, and local levels that build understanding and buy-in, while translating the assessment into guidance for implementation and monitoring.
3. Developed through a transparent, collaborative process to the greatest extent possible. This collaborative process must be consistent with agency requirements for collaboration and NEPA.
3. Grounded in agency authorities, which are clearly articulated and understood by all participants.
4. Grounded in revised agency policy that emphasize larger, ecoregional assessments as the foundation for planning and management, and grounded in the most efficient and effective agency procedures that are based on current science.
5. Built on revised agency work processes that better accommodate translating broad-scale assessments into land use planning, implementation, and monitoring and coordinating across agencies. These revised work processes should allow for setting more national direction, and allow for plans at the local level to be more flexible and context-driven to better accommodate coordination and adaptive management.

BLM Assumptions

Ecoregional assessments must be (pg. 16 of Lessons Learned Report):

1. Focused on key questions — *True*
2. Grounded in conceptual models linking key attributes and change agents — *True*
3. Focused on synthesizing existing information not on collecting new information or on conducting research — *True and False*

4. Transparent — *True*
5. Approached as an ongoing process not a one-time ad hoc effort — *True and False*
6. Scaled to address landscape issues but not too large to be politically unmanageable — *True and False*
7. Informative not decisional — *True*

Ecoregional Direction must be (pg. 19 of Lessons Learned Report):

1. Developed through an iterative process involving multiple organizational levels — *True*
2. Developed through a collaborative process to the extent that cross-jurisdictional action is required — *True*
3. Consistent with the public disclosure, public participation, and interagency coordination requirements associated with planning and environmental impact assessments — *True*
4. Grounded in agency mission and authority — *True and False*
5. Built on existing agency work processes such as land use planning, use authorization, budgeting, and project design and implementation — *True and False*

Management must have the opportunity to (pg. 20 of Lessons Learned Report):

1. Identify the key management questions the assessment will answer — *True*
2. Participate in critical decision points during the assessment process and in the development of ecoregional direction — *True*

Resource specialists must have the opportunity to (pg. 20 of Lessons Learned Report):

1. Validate and supplement the assessment information with finer-filter local information — *True and False*
2. Help define how assessment information may be used in day-to-day management activities — *True*

Partners must have the opportunity to (pg. 22 of the Lessons Learned Report):

1. Help identify the key management questions the assessment will answer — *True*
2. See their work incorporated into the assessment where appropriate — *True*
3. Help develop ecoregional direction — *True and False*

Maggie ended her presentation with the following discussion questions for participants to consider:

1. Is your experience consistent with the information in this Lessons Learned report?
2. If not, how does it differ?
3. Did we miss anything critical?

Lessons Learned with Landscape Scale Assessment & Planning Processes

Susan asked participants to answer the three questions presented by Maggie. The discussion below is organized into two sections: 1) *Is your experience consistent with the information in the Lessons Learned Report? If not, how does it differ?* and 2) *Did we miss anything critical?* Each section is then organized into categories, identified by participants at the end of the first day of the workshop.

Is your experience consistent with the information in the Lessons Learned Report? If not, how does it differ?

Capacity	Experience and training of resource staff is important for successful implementation; NEPA, RMPs, applications for uses
	Need to articulate staff roles and responsibilities to successfully implement ▪ *The USFWS inventorying and monitoring platform, for example, is very articulate about roles and responsibilities at various levels.*
	Need to define the role of the specialists in the REA/Landscape Approach process ▪ *The report talks about buy-in but in order to get that buy-in, the role of the resource specialist, for example, needs to be defined in the process.*
	Need to invest in staff (not necessarily "new" staff) ▪ *It may just be a restructuring of staff, a different approach. Dedicated resources and staff shows that this is not just an initiative but a long-term way of doing business.*
Communication	A lot of education of internal staff is missing in the REA process (ex: resource specialist level) ▪ *It's very important to educate people, to get them up to speed, and to understand the goals of the project.* ▪ *Education of not just people in this room and the public, but also our staff. We have resource specialists that are trying to hold a piece of ground to a static viewpoint- "this is how it was in 1940."*
	Avoid use of "education" – term itself ▪ *Don't say the field needs "education" but rather there needs to be more communication from the Washington Office through to the field level.*
Data	It is naïve for us to infer "trends" or "status" using spatial data with less than 50% accuracy ▪ *Merge datasets and try to take the best of all datasets so we have the best data to work from.*
	Disclose the data quality and availability ▪ *If we are drawing very general conclusions because we have low quality spatial data, it could be argued we are wasting money.*

Implementation	REAs should be informational not decisional
	Regional interagency teams can perpetuate tensions between regulatory and land management agencies
	Regional inter-agency teams can be a bottleneck in implementation ▪ *Regional teams trying to interpret what the (NWFP) plan meant for us were not effective in stepping down implementation. I would argue for BLM to control our implementation of the regional direction.*
	Senior scientists shouldn't develop management direction (i.e. Founding Fathers concept) ▪ *The agencies need to develop the direction – we found with the NWFP that we couldn't change anything once the senior scientists were gone. They didn't go through same kinds of processes (EIS, etc) and they didn't show us their work so we didn't know how they arrived at their conclusions.*
	Work processes are, in some cases, non-existent, rather than simply in need of change
Interface between science and management	A blend of managers and scientists need to shape the assessment questions ▪ *The level and type of research would be different if there is a blending of science and land managers.*
	Science products need to be used by/useful to managers
	Senior scientists won't engage in collaborating and developing questions with managers and other stakeholders
Leadership	Lack of leadership is creating the impression that this is just another short-lived initiative, rather than a new way of doing business ▪ *Management at the state level think that this is a short term project (initiative) and that it will drift away with next administration. The leadership needs to send us the message that this will be around into the future.* ▪ *There is a lack of leadership from the top – there is a core group of people that believe it has a lot of value but until it is really integrated, and we can show how it will help address complex issues, such as budget and staffing, people won't invest in it long term.*
	National leadership is missing from the REA process ▪ *There has not been much top down support – written support to the state directors, field managers and down.* ▪ *There needs to be a consistent strong message from BLM leadership. The word is not getting down to the field that this is important.* ▪ *There is difference between management and leadership and you need the support of both. One consequence from not having leadership is that we*

	don't get education – if leadership says you shall do this- there is process to educate staff.
Other	Need to emphasize equally both process and product. "Product" shows the process is worthwhile ▪ *Groups that focused on process without incorporating outputs were not successful. Those groups that defined what the processes were but started to focus on products also were much more successful in the short and long term.* ▪ *Understanding the product is very important to take into ecoregional direction development. People need to know and be able to visualize the product and how it will be used.*
Partnering	Need greater awareness and emphasis on relationships, for example state and federal agencies, e.g. wildlife ▪ *We have to be careful about recognizing our efforts and roles as opposed to other agencies and states. It is important because it gives us a better understanding on how to handle politics of turf.*
Program integration	Need to articulate the effect on the field – what will/should this mean to them? ▪ *In terms of integrating ecoregional assessments into the business of the Bureau - how does it affect people on the ground? How does it affect processes? Does it create new processes?*
	Program integration (substance and budget) is critical to effecting real change
Public process	Building trust and ownership with the public can be difficult within the short timeframe of REAs ▪ *Public involvement and "rapid" do not go together – so how do we engage the public?* ▪ *Don't want to get adrift because the public doesn't know where you are headed.*
	Collaboration will change the way we do business in the future (ex: alternatives for Sage-grouse Plan Amendment)
	Need to develop collaborative process to address changing participants
	Scientists generally resist being involved in public processes
Purpose of REAs	Need to clearly articulate the value of REAs beyond just developing RMPs (i.e. implementation and maintenance)
	Not sure that REAs are necessary
Science	Credibility should be based on the quality of work, not just the "names" of scientists ▪ *We can't make their list of credentials so tight that we can't deal with our own scientists. We want to be able to use the best minds we can.*

Other	Need to emphasize equally both process and product. "Product" shows the process is worthwhile • Groups that focused on process without discrepancy outputs were not successful. Those groups that defined what the processes were but started to focus on product also were much more successful in the short and long term. • Understanding the product is very important to take into consideration direction new planners. People want to know and be able to visualize the product and how it will be used
Partnering	Need greater awareness and emphasis on relationships, for example state and federal agencies, e.g. wildlife • We have to be careful about recognizing our efforts and roles as opposed to other agencies and stories. It is important because it gives us a better understanding on how to handle politics of it all
Program Integration	Need to articulate the effect on the field – what will/should this mean to them? • In terms of being cutting edge/national agenda/in the business of the future – how does it fit? Is it a priority? How does it affect processes? Does it create new processes?
Public process	Progress in integration, laboratories, and budget is critical to effecting real change Building trust and ownership with the public can be difficult within the short timeframe of REAs • Public process must ask "right" do not go in/offer – to how do we engage the public? • Don't want to get stuck be sure the public doesn't have where you are headed
Purpose of REAs	Collaboration will change the way we do business in the future (e.g. alternatives lab/ Sage-grouse Plan Amendment) Need to develop collaborative process to address changing participants Scientists generally resist being involved in public processes Need to clearly articulate the value of REAs beyond just developing RMPs (i.e. implementation and maintenance) Not sure that REAs are necessary
Science	Credibility should be based on the quality of work, not just the "names" of scientists • We can't create their list of credentials to light that we can't deal with our own scientists. We want to be able to use the best minds we can

	▪ *"Independent senior scientist with strong publication record" doesn't square with the other lessons that are management focused. Scientists with strong publication records are researchers, not managers.*
	Peer review should be conducted by people with relevant expertise ▪ *Call it "science review or professional review" not "peer review" – peer review has a very specific meeting.*
	REAs defined by issue vs. geography pose different science and public participation challenges
	REAS should not set a false expectation for restoration ▪ *Mention viability studies – we have rose-colored glasses in how we are viewing long-term land health and we need to lay out some harsh realities, such as the loss of some environments and some keystone species. Don't set a false expectation that we can conserve and restore all landscapes.*
	There are no "independent" scientists - this notion devalues our own specialists ▪ *We have for years gotten deference from courts, as our monitoring data is being attacked. Courts and judges will still value our scientists work vs. "independent" scientists.*
	There needs to be some ability to customize individual REAs, but there needs to be some consistent framework ▪ *In the seven REAs already initiated, there is a lot of flexibility, but as a consequence, we are at risk of having them go their own unique direction too much to maintain consistency. Too much flexibility leads to inconsistency and lack of cohesive vision, goals and objectives down the road.*

Did we miss anything critical?

Capacity	Staffing – Articulating roles and responsibilities necessary to successfully implement – questions/guidance from others
Communication	What has BLM learned from the landscape approach?
Data	Weak with regard to data ▪ *Data was only generically referred to in report*
	Weak with regard to working at multiple scales
Implementation	Work processes are, in some cases, non-existent, rather than simply in need of change (p.20)
	How Greater Sage-grouse initiative was "stepped down" – couldn't connect

	ecoregional direction "lessons learned" with GSG – no process articulated ▪ *Maggie McCaffrey noted that the part of the Lessons Learned Report that focused on the sage-grouse plan did not include specific management direction because they hadn't reached that point in the project yet. They are just now starting to step-down the information from the sage-grouse plan and implement direction.*
	More detailed description of the step down process ▪ *Worries me that assessments are something we are making up and there are no rules for it. In planning, there are clear rules. The danger of not having any processes or rules developed is something we should be concerned about.*
Leadership	Not that much "top down" support from national office/state directors. Pressing local issues trump these efforts. Looking for a memo (leadership message) referencing importance to the field
Public Process	Disconnect between NEPA and assessment process. Need clearer understanding of how to write these with NEPA in mind ▪ *Efficiencies and challenges with the NEPA process need to be addressed in the report.* ▪ *We reinforce that REAs are intended to inform, not for decision-making, so how does that tie into NEPA?* ▪ *Link the assessments to NEPA and Resource Management Plans.*
	Haven't answered to what degree public involvement is needed in assessment process ▪ *What is the role of public engagement in these assessments? There are different perceptions as to if there is a role for public engagement – need to work through some definitions.*
Purpose of REAs	Doesn't set out "problem" REA is supposed to solve ▪ *Need to articulate why BLM needs REAs as something different than existing processes.*
Science	Report didn't mention long-term health realities – false expectation for restoration in some cases
	Issue vs. geography driven – poses challenges that should be addressed ▪ *Whether we are doing generic assessments or programmatic, the transition from focusing on issues to focusing on geography and the overall ecosystem will pose interesting challenges.*

	• Maggie McCaffrey noted that the part of the lessons learned report that focused on the step-process plan did not include specific employment direction because they hadn't reached that point in the project yet. They are just now starting to step-down the information from the step-process plan and implement direction.
	More detailed description of the step down process • Worries me that case-comments are confusing we are making up one there are no rules for it. In planning, there are clear rules. The danger of not having any processes or rules developed is something we should be concerned about.
Leadership	Not that much "top down" support from national office/state directors. Pressing local issues trump these efforts. Looking for a strong leadership message reiterating importance in the field.
Public Process, Outreach	Disconnect between NEPA and assessment process. Need clearer understanding of how to write these with NEPA in mind • Efficiencies and overlaps with the NEPA process need to be addressed in the report • We reinforce that HCAs are intended to inform, not for decision-making, so how does that tie into NEPA? • Link the assessments to NEPA and Resource Management Plans Haven't answered to what degree public involvement is needed in Assessment process • What is the role of public engagement in these assessments? There are different perspectives on as it fares in a role for public engagement – need to have a dialogue some definitions
Purpose of HCAs	Doesn't set out "problem" HCA is supposed to solve • Need to articulate very first needs "HCA is something different than existing processes
Tribes	Report didn't mention long-term health realities – take appreciation for restoration in some cases
	Issue vs. geography driven – perhaps clarify ways that should be addressed • Whether we are doing generic assessments or programmatic, the transition from focusing on issues to focusing on geography and the overall ecosystem will open interesting challenges

The Landscape Approach

Participants identified the following challenges regarding the overall landscape approach:

1. Addressing the viability issue
2. Preparation to work in "a new way" – People are not currently equipped, in many cases- get to this more quickly!
3. Budget and the way we measure accomplishment
4. Really a need for data Lessons Learned – need to work out these details to be successful in connecting scale

Discussion

- In the Secretarial Order, Salazar was general about data standards but did say we need to create an integrated database. Climate change has come forward in the last decade and it is not going to go away.
- The National Operations Center (NOC) is struggling with how prescriptive BLM should be with contractors. We need to keep the REAs consistent among ecoregions. If BLM doesn't have direct input, then we run the risk of not being able to reassess because we either don't have, or don't fully understand, what was done previously.
    - Concern is more about direction than the assessment and the data itself. The NWFP had problems around the assessments that led to this management direction. They couldn't see how the scientists got from assessment to management direction. BLM needs to be involved in management direction because we will need to change it eventually.
- The fact that we organized the REAs as we have indicates that we have learned a lot of lessons from the NWFP. The management team is involved in defining management questions and we are not just contracting to do the assessment. There is a distinction between the assessment itself and ecoregional direction. As an organization, we learned from problems of the NWFP and tried to address them in the REA process, in order to avoid having a group of scientists or contractors develop a product that we wouldn't be able to use in the future.
- You have to have a close working relationship with your contractor to have a good Resource Management Plan (RMP).
- BLM is a permit/use type of agency. NEPA is an analysis tool, not a decision tool. The idea of broad landscape level analysis is new to us and we are using our best minds and science to figure this out.
- It is important to have clarity about what expectations are. In the Northern Great Basin pilot ecoregional assessment, we were relying on an individual to pull together GIS data but then he started using his own analysis and ideas. The key thing that came out of that was the need to document the process to be able to come back and rerun or revise models. Documenting the process is increasingly complex when bringing in more partners but it is really important.

- In the Northern Great Basin project, did you define roles, such as data stewards? How did you manage that to make sure it was documented?
    - We explored those roles and explored data standards. The basic key is in knowing where the data came from; it is increasingly complex when working on various datasets from various sources.
- What is the one overarching, clear reason for doing REAs? There are some renewable energy issues and climate change issues but no overarching reason why we are doing this. We need to have a reason to get buy-in. There is overlap with LCCs, and the USFS doing a similar effort - are we duplicating efforts or is there a reason for REAs?
    - We have tried to articulate those reasons – please look at the documents on the web site if you haven't (http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/climatechange.html)
- We have bounced around the idea of Bob Abbey broadcasting something to the field- what would that look like?
    - It would need to involve not just communication but prioritization and the budgetary process. There has been no verbalization from leadership that this is important.
    - We had a workshop on the Healthy Lands Initiative in Ft. Collins and shortly after that, Caswell broadcast how important it is – it didn't change anything. Unless we have state directors and cross-organizational teams working together, this won't work. Someone has to make the statement and demonstrate this is important to us in a big way.
- One way to demonstrate the importance of this is to create competition for funding.
- At the first Great Northern LCC meeting people were wondering what the LCC was about and concerned about overlapping efforts. The Steering Committee took the time to lay out the vision, mission and five key goals and objectives at that meeting. That is one way to provide direction and it did help the Steering Committee and stakeholders. Alternatively, the Plains and Prairie Potholes LCC had a different approach and did not lay out their vision and mission and there is still a negative attitude about that LCC. A next step for this process could be to articulate the direction we are going.
- It is my understanding that there are specific items in the performance appraisal for state directors with climate change.
- We don't compete as well as universities for the dollars from government, for climate. The money is there and it is going to universities – we have to compete for the money.
- From BLM perspective, we need to know climate change data to be able to manage land and Universities are developing climate change models.

Kit Muller thanked everyone for the good discussion and said that as he mentioned earlier, BLM initiated seven assessments, which will be completed 2012, and they plan to initiate four more in 2011. Kit asked participants to think about the following questions, given the discussion they just had:

1. Are there specific things we should do differently for the 2011 assessments?

2. In terms of developing the step-down process, we are planning to create a small design team to come up with the process and then take the draft process to different regions to see if makes sense to them (Wyoming, Northern Great Basin, Chihuahuan Desert). We would then synthesize the results of that workshop and issue guidance (early in 2012). In thinking in the conversation this afternoon, are there specific things the design team should think about? Are there specific things we should factor into these workshops? The design team would meet in February and the workshops would be held shortly thereafter.
3. As a result of the Park City workshop, we are forming a strike team of managers in January to review a lot of this stuff. Are there specific things you would like us to take to those managers?

Comments

- Travis Haby noted that there is still some opportunity to influence certain aspects of the 2010 REAs.
- Jon Foster said there should be an iterative process to continually inform the REAs as new one are started.
- Pat Mahoney noted that BLM has made a lot of steps in the last year to create a framework for standardizing data sets. He asked participants to contact him with ideas or particular datasets they would like to see included for standardization or compilation.

Susan noted that the facilitation team would sort through the material discussed and categorize for the discussion the following day. Participants suggested the following categories: data, science, program integration, leadership, capacity, public processes, communication, implementation and interface between science and management. (Comments in this summary are presented in those identified categories).

Tuesday, November 30, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Introduction to Day 2

Susan told participants that the facilitation team had taken all of the flipcharts for "experience" and typed them into a spreadsheet and then categorized them into the categories participants suggested. She said comments were sorted and synthesized into the table on the handout in front of them. (See appendix for handout). Susan said they would use this as the basis to focus the discussion on REAs and implications, as well as to capture any messages or input to provide to the management team.

Susan also noted that in addition to talking about implications, they would like to discuss the recommendations in the Lessons Learned Report. Based on the previous days' discussion, some of those recommendations may need alteration

Susan asked participants, given the "experiences" table and lessons learned in the report, what does that say about the REA process? What would they do differently for future REAs- 2011? She noted that in order to have that conversation, it was assumed that participants understood the REA process. Since that understanding differed among meeting participants, she asked Craig to provide a brief overview.

REA overview

Craig Goodwin provided a brief overview of the REA process and noted that trying to keep everybody informed about the overall process is a challenge. Craig said a little over a year ago, BLM brought resource managers together and asked, what are issues that will be driving management in your region? For example, wild horses or wind development. Managers, not scientists, identified issues. He said they then identified conservation elements (desert tortoise locations or sagebrush habitat, for example), and developed the change agents that may affect those conservation elements (population growth, power lines, energy development). The questions managers are asking is: how, in a changing environment, do we maintain sustainability of our landscapes? A seven step approach, broken into two phases, was developed to help answer this question:

Phase One

1. Develop a base ecoregional model, refine management questions, select conservation elements and select change agents.
2. Identify, evaluate and recommend potential datasets.
3. Identify, evaluate and recommend methods, models and tools.
4. Prepare the Rapid Ecoregional Assessment Work Plan (REAWP).

Phase Two

5. Compile and generate "source" datasets.
6. Conduct analyses and generate findings.
7. Prepare REA documents.

Tyler Abbott added that minimally, all assessments should address core ecological values: native fish, wildlife, or plants of regional concern, and both terrestrial and aquatic regionally important ecological features, functions, or services. All REAs should address values and how the four change agents (invasive species, wild land fire, climate change, and development) affect those values. There may be additional change agents for some REAs. An important piece of the REA is that the management questions and priorities on the ground drive the REA approach.

Jon Foster said in the Great Basin pilot assessment some of the basic concerns they had were: where the best sagebrush habitat remained, where the areas at risk were, how to understand that risk, where the sage-grouse were that use that habitat, what was being affected by invasive species, where fire risks were. The information of the best habitat with all of the identified risks associated with each piece of habitat was then provided to the manager. One area that is good habitat may have high risks; while another that is also good habitat has moderate risks. This information will help managers from a

regional perspective develop priorities. If there is only $100,000 to protect habitat between Oregon, Idaho and Nevada, this information will help them decide what area is best to protect.

Implications

The following implications were discussed by participants throughout the morning session. Following the implications section, more details on the discussion can be found, categorized by topic.

Implications to Ecoregional Direction

1. Need to ensure BLM employees really understand how ecoregional direction affects day to day management – relationship to "decision-making process" (eg. NEPA, "Instructional Memo")
2. Ecoregional direction should point the way, rather than make "NEPA" decisions or preclude future NEPA options
3. Should develop set of assumptions for ecoregional direction (also helps support need to continue REAs – what REAs lead to)
    - E.g. That there needs to be direction "between" assumption and a REA and a field office decision
4. Spell out how to use coarse data from REA with fine data found locally

Implications to future REAs

1. Make a case for Bureau funding of future REAs to demonstrate agency commitment
2. Must determine how to "refresh" REAs (with partners) over time
3. Need 'corporate' geo-spatial database that will also function across other agencies and utilizes other's data
4. Have better structured management questions at the start (developed iteratively)
    - Good blend of managers/scientists
5. Identify how to involve public at some level in developing management questions
6. Capture lessons learned and adapt ongoing processes/REAs as we go (provide good internal communication)
7. Focus questions on regional issues; not issues that are highly localized
8. Balance REA focus between BLM interests and partners interests
9. Budgets are a very real driver of REA scope
10. Disclosure of data quality is important for how REAs are used in the future
11. Certain management questions can be answered at specific "grain" of data
    - Some coarse, some fine
    - Need to be explicit about this
12. Ecoregional assessments are a tool, but may not be the only tool in states where there is not enough BLM land base to justify BLM-based REA

13. Assessment at some level is essential

Input to Management Team:

1. Involve field office in decisions and strategies involving work and budgets based on opportunities identified in REAs
2. National level leadership is so important
    - Especially related to NEPA and planning concerns
    - Especially describing:
        - What REA and ecoregional direction is
        - How it's used
        - Why it's important and good for BLM
        - "Cultural" implication to BLM
        - How this is different than what BLM is doing now
        - What it isn't
3. Lessons learned tells us that national leadership needs to frame this "initiative" for the agency
    - It's a better way to get our work done (NEPA/planning)
4. Commitment by Director to identify, specifically, how this will improve our work, quality, and efficiency
5. Agency needs time to factor in lessons learned from the first seven REAs – time to better craft this "business model"
    - What assessments say about current management
6. Need capacity and support within agency to do this (see #5)
7. Identify leadership "champions" for this approach (not all at the national level – "younger" staff)
8. Communicate entire landscape approach to provide context to REAs and ecoregional direction and where they add value
    - Possibilities and limitations of landscape approach
9. State-by-state road show to engage BLM as stakeholders
10. Leadership commitment expressed through staffing and capacity based on needed roles and responsibility

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REA process discussion

- The current seven REAs are contracted out. Will the next four also be contracted or will they be conducted in-house?
    - Kit Muller said they don't know the budget yet but they assume they will be contracted. He said if they do the four they intend to do next year then a large portion of west would be complete. Then it will be a question of engaging other partners in this process, for example, BLM would need to see if the USFS would want to fund an assessment or set up a management team to do an assessment.
- Does the REA report have conclusory statements about what is needed in certain areas?

- Craig said that they tried to separate direction from the assessment product; there is no guidance or direction in the assessment.

- What is the shelf-life of an assessment? Will you be updating them?
  - Craig said the assessments will be a snapshot using available data. There is discussion about conducting supplemental assessments to update the REAs but that process has not yet been determined.
  - Travis Haby added that shelf life is a factor of the data that is used for the assessments. He said the base layer should be refreshed every five or ten years, while disturbances, such as fire, may change yearly. He said the assessments are set up so that there is a static copy and also a copy that can be changed and updated with new information. He said he believes the assessments will have a long shelf-life because it will be possible to update them.

Kit mentioned that at the federal partners meeting in September there was discussion about updating the REAs and keeping them current. Federal partners indicated that for this process to work, the REAs need to have periodic reassessments. They need to think through how to refresh the assessments with a systematic process that includes multiple agencies and multiple funding sources. BLM doesn't have a plan to create a process at this time.

- Need to have flexibility in the assessment process and document it well enough so that we know how to make adjustments, if needed.

- Transparency in the REA process – if a decision is made, it will be transparent and the trade-offs that are part of that decision will be clear. The REA will not dictate what managers decide.

- Were the questions that were raised at the beginning of the REA process the right questions to ask? Did they result in pointing us in a direction after the assessment? Was there something about early management questions that did or did not work?
  - Craig said when the assessments were starting, it was very ad hoc. He said after going through the first seven assessments, they will have a more structured approach for developing management questions.
  - Jon Foster said they had an evaluation of management questions developed for the first REAs. He said they had workshops with field offices and managers to talk about preliminary management questions that contractors used for proposals. They found the process led to an over-abundance of questions so they had to bring it back to something simpler. He said the answers to the management questions should provide managers with a context of where things are and how important they are.

- Were the right people in the room when the REAs were started?
  - Craig said it was a lot of managers and that some did road tours. He said while there was a lot of variety, you could make the case that not everyone that would have been helpful was in the room.

- Jason Taylor noted that while blending management and science didn't happen in initial phase, it happened shortly after. He said the Washington Office program staff looked at preliminary management questions and provided comments.
- Craig said that after the developing the questions, they continued to bring more people together to refine the management questions and make it a transparent process. He also noted that the REA team leads at the NOC are trying to share and learn from each other to improve future assessments.

- It seems like there is a balance of being inclusive and gaining efficiencies.
  - Craig said at the second workshop, 50% of the participants were new people and were just learning about REAs. He acknowledged that there is a balance and a challenge to bring in more people, with all of their questions. The more people you bring in, the more ideas you gather but also end up trundling through things already discussed.
- REAs do have a budget, which limits how much they can do and how many questions they can look at – some things are going to fall out of scope.
- Possibilities are endless in terms of questions you could ask and people to involve. It is the BLM product that we will use though and if the assessment doesn't lead to a product that can help managers make decisions on the ground, it is a failure.
- Another point of balance – don't get lost in our partners priorities but stay focused. This is a BLM initiative and partners should not be driving the process.
- Need to have sensitivity for our partners and be careful not to turn any off by just doing what works best for us.
- Need to be aware how we approach partners and ask them for input – need to maintain relationship to be productive.
- I am hearing an assumption that this is going to create a radical change, but will we really know that until we complete the REAs, determine the direction we need to go, and then compare that to existing plans?
  - REAs will provide more information and will help prioritize some of the things we do. For example, they may help us identify conflict or problem areas for proposed transmission corridors.
- Is the intention that all BLM lands would be covered by an assessment?
  - Kit said that would be ideal, but given the land base in some areas they may not fund REAs, such as Washington state where there is a very small percentage of BLM land.
- The assessments can help us recognize those things that we may have the opportunity to restore or conserve and those things we may not. The assessments can help us save money by not trying to save something that we won't be able to restore.

Kit said it may be useful to think of this in two timeframes. First of all, why here and why now? Kit said BLM is the largest manager of a comparatively un-fragmented landscape and BLM managers are making a lot of decisions at the local level that affect that landscape. He said they have the potential to dramatically change the western landscape. Kit continued that as an organization, they have a short window to address this so they don't inadvertently foreclose options. Caswell said that BLM should look at the landscape and see if there are parts they want to conserve. The REAs will help the Bureau as an organization identify areas to maintain. BLM may not have that option to conserve a decade from now if they continue managing as they are now. Kit said the other time frame is the long-term ecological processes and how they may be affected by climate change. In order to try to manage land long-term, there needs to be a coherent database across the landscape. Kit said BLM is having a discussion with NRCS about how to expand inventories and get more systematic information across the landscape.

Ecoregional direction discussion

- If a guidebook is developed on how to conduct an ecoregional assessment, consider that the guidebook would look different for contractors than for internal BLM use.
- BLM has articulated assumptions for REAs. Are there similar assumptions about the step-down for direction?
    - Travis noted that the BLM is operating under certain assumptions, for example, that they will be able to do ecoregional direction and NEPA would come later. He said it would be valuable to develop a set of assumptions for ecoregional direction.
- Direction or guidance for the field needs to be specific. If we try to implement this in the field, and broadly say, "We are going to head in this direction," there is going to be a disconnect with the field.
- Assumption that there has to be something between the REA and the actual plan (ecoregional direction).
- The implication is that when looking at ecoregional direction, the state level needs to be involved. Again, it relates to communication and involvement issues.

Kit noted that ecoregional direction will probably lead to or require plan amendments, but will also lead to changes in BMPs and use authorization processes. It may also affect the way BLM puts together land and water funding proposals and it could affect the way BLM funds project dollars. In other words, ecoregional direction will affect more than just the planning process. Kit said that the mapping of the sage-grouse core habitat areas, for example, is going to lead to statewide plan amendments. In addition, there is talk about developing Best Management Practices (BMPs) so in the core habitat areas that are available for oil and gas development, the spacing will only be one well per section. BLM and NRCS are working on how to monitor those areas.

Outreach strategy and BLM internal buy-in discussion

- Need to make a case for the value of what we are doing to continue the funding past allocations through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA); this will demonstrate agency commitment.
- It is important to really have people understand ecoregional direction in order to get buy-in.
- There is going to be a lot of skepticism about BLM appearing to be making decisions outside of the decision-making process. May be better to use term other than "direction".
    - The phrasing of ecoregional direction can be changed – it is just a concept.
- Ecoregional direction right now is a concept and how it will evolve from here is unknown. It was mentioned that it is an iterative process, but beyond that, it is a wide-open idea.
- Important to articulate the product and not just the process. For the stakeholder, it is not just the product but what that product leads to that is important.
- If the people in this room don't understand what the REA process is – how are we going to expect field level people to understand?
- There is a lot of discussion about why here, why now, what REAs are, the scale, scope, and timeframes. All of this suggests that national level leadership standing behind this is really important. We need to articulate what it is we are doing and what the utility is with the strength of national level leadership. There needs to be strategy behind this national directive.
- I am concerned about trying to communicate to the field about what this is when we are still trying to define ecoregional direction.
    - We can present to the field the big picture framework.
- Some of us will look at this and say, this is not new business; this is what we have been doing.
- We need to have a vision and leadership support. We have worked on this for two years and invested a lot of time and money. How long can that go without leadership behind us?

Susan said that what she was hearing was that there needs to be national leadership related to NEPA concerns, as well articulation on how REAs will be used, why they are important, why they good for BLM, their cultural implication to BLM, how this process is different than what is currently being done.

- Don't pose the NEPA question to national leadership – we need leadership to stand behind what we are doing so it is better not to inject concerns about NEPA.
- Don't present this as something new or something additional, but rather a better way to get things done. NEPA and planning are part of our daily work so package it as, if you have an assessment, your job will be easier. Leaving out NEPA and planning misses the opportunity to get our original work done.
- Demonstrate how REAs contribute to our regular work and will create efficiencies and improve our decision-making.

- Demonstrate how REAs can help solve some of the big things people struggle with in the NEPA process.
- Factor in time to assimilate the results of the seven initial REAs in order to successfully implement this change – don't rush into proclamation that this is a new way until we look at successes and needed adjustments from the first REAs.
- We need capacity to develop this new business model, it can't be done with this small group – we need help throughout the Bureau.
- This new business model and culture will take time to develop. A lot of questions will need to be addressed if we are really going to manage across landscapes. For example, how are we going to approach grazing permits?
- The USFWS made a cultural change from managing for ducks and geese to managing for upland birds. It took time but they were successful at making the shift partly because of the younger staff who were excited about the idea. We need to engage the younger staff to make this successful and build momentum.
- It is important to think about how it is all framed – it is a new way of basis and there will be some changes but it is also important to remember that we are seeing issues take on more of a landscape perspective.
- When we communicate this message to the general BLM audience, we need to focus on the entire landscape approach. REAs and ecoregional direction are only pieces of the landscape approach. When you understand the whole picture, it helps you see the value of the entire approach.
- Barry's overview of the landscape approach (on the website) helps put all of the pieces in context and reinforces the idea that ecoregional direction and REAs are part of the package.

Barry asked participants to look at the overview of the landscape approach on the web site, including the set of Q&A's on REAs and the landscape approach and provide him with any feedback. He noted that he can't include all of this information in a memo from Bob Abbey, but will refer staff to the web site to learn more.

- There needs to be a broader outreach plan for the landscape approach – just a memo is not going to be sufficient.
- Create a tool kit to have discussion about landscape approach with staff using the information from website, lessons learned workshops, ecoregional directional workshops, and state management team meetings.
- Encourage Bob Abbey to use the blog to engage the larger BLM audience once the memo goes out.
- Put together workshops state by state to engage staff.

- Capacity – without staffing direction and support, this will fail. We need structure, and then we assign roles and responsibilities. It will not succeed if it stays at it is now.
- Be clear that if REAs are not being used in some areas, there are other processes being used. REAs are one tool to accomplish what we want to accomplish, but they are not the *only* tool.
- Have dialogue with other field managers about the resources and what we are doing.
- My staff wants direction and leadership. If I have that guidance from the top, from the state director, that makes it easier for everyone.
- This approach helps create opportunity for discussion beyond field office boundaries. Within field offices though, it does have the potential to create winners and losers. You may think your sage-grouse habitat is really important, but if another field office has more important habitat, they may get more resources.

NEPA discussion

- Why was it decided to take these assessments and conduct them outside of the NEPA process? We have done things like this inside the NEPA process.
    - We looked at it as gathering and synthesizing data and not making decisions. Once we make decisions, then we will take it through the NEPA process.
- Don't mix together things that require NEPA and those that don't.
- Ecoregional direction should point the way, rather than make NEPA decisions.
- Priorities shouldn't preclude NEPA. If priorities are decided and *then* you do NEPA, you have constrained the ability to do robust NEPA.
- NEPA questions are relevant and a core issue for ecoregional direction.
- A NEPA discussion would be appropriate to have at the ecoregional direction workshops planned for spring 2011.

Data discussion

- Create a 'corporate geospatial database'. Need to have identical metadata standards not only across states but across multiple agencies and need to maintain the database.
- The data management aspect of this is important. Recognize we are not the owners of all of this data – we are using other agencies data. The foundation for doing any sort of updates is good documentation. Need to establish to allow us to easily update data.
- How do we address the fact that you may use a different definition for what is "good" sage-grouse habitat in Idaho, than I use in Colorado? How do we compare that or does it matter?
- The NOC is working on a data management strategy.

- Is there some discussion on coarse scale data? Will that have implications for decision-making?
    - Craig said that the regional assessments are done at a broader scale and that coarse scale data is an issue. Regional planning vs. a field plots study is very different.
- There are ways of translating regional data to local. Ultimately, decisions need to be made appropriate to the scale of data.
- The disclosure of data quality is important for stepping it down.
- Ecoregional direction is broad scale and general based on the data. The mistake of the NWFP was to make specific, place-based decisions using broad data.
- Fine and course data shouldn't be viewed as mutually exclusive. For ecoregional direction, disclose what data limitations there are and for translating the information into step down, identify how local data can be used.
- The assessments help us to determine where we need fine scale data. Not having to acquire fine scale data across the entire landscape can save money and time.
- NEPA requires us to disclose data quality.
- Coarse scale data can be ground-truthed – depends on what you are trying to represent. Certain management questions can be answered with certain scales of data – determine which questions need fine or coarse scale data and understand the limitations of data.

Other discussion

Marty Griffith said that for the sage-grouse plan they are having a three-day meeting with cooperators and the public. He said sage-grouse policy for Wyoming has been developed and one product from that policy was the core area maps that Kit mentioned. Marty said they are developing the land use plan amendment and alternatives and anticipate it to take two years.

- A key point regarding the sage-grouse plan is that a lot of decisions have not been made.
- Will you still be looking at alternatives that are not consistent with the sage-grouse strategy?
    - Marty said yes, they will be looking at various alternatives, including a no action alternative.

Kit said that they could learn from what happened in Wyoming. Historically, every field office would decide how to use or not to use an assessment. In Wyoming, the governor said that everyone needed to address what was happening with the sage-grouse in the state. This happened at the state-wide level, rather than every office by itself. Kit said we need to have something between the assessment and land-use planning or use authorization, that there needs to be a discussion about potential management implications at a landscape scale. He said they want to come up with a process to try to facilitate that conversation. For example, if we want to conserve the Owyhee, what are implications about how

programs should work together in this area? What are implications in terms of funding? At a regional scale, we need to have a discussion about the implications of the organization as a whole.

Jason noted that Linda Anania mentioned her perception of REAs was different after today's discussion. He asked Linda if she was more or less concerned.

- Both – I thought REAs were specifically a climate process, that their focus was on climate change and how the Bureau would deal with climate change. I am concerned to learn this isn't the case. I am hopeful thought because I hear that this is an interdisciplinary process, and you are talking about cumulative effects. It seems to be a very organized and thoughtful process on how we are going to define the questions and data needs, as well as where we are going to bring the public in to the process. It seems to be a very interdisciplinary process and I expect out of this we will have better decisions.

Recommendations in the Lessons Learned Report

Kit said as they discussed at the end of yesterday, they are interested in what BLM should consider as we do new assessments. As a result of this workshop, they want to end up with a refined set of recommendations to take to the management team and design team.

The following feedback on recommendations was noted by participants:

1. Capture technical recommendations on REAs
    - Data workshop
    - Opportunity to review key questions as they relate to each REA
2. Clarify that 4a "goals and objectives" is related to "process" not managing land
3. Edit 4a from "clearly delineated targets" to "conservation elements"
4. Clarify that 4i "plans" is referring to resource management plans (RMPs)
5. Clarify 4i "adaptive management" statement – adaptive management and monitoring are not part of the REA process but they flow out of the process
6. What do we need to do in ecoregional direction to set up for more flexible, adaptive management
7. Broadly cast recommendations for landscape approach
8. In 4a & b replace "expert opinion" with "professional opinion"

Kit shared some observations with participants. He said he was in the director's office for 12 years and has been to 15 years of Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meetings in the BLM. He has observed that in a "good" ELT meeting, there are meaningful side conversations in the hall, but in the general meeting there are not decisions that affect everyone. Kit said directors are good at putting out "brush fires" but most managers, including those in the Washington Office, do not feel comfortable dealing with overall strategic direction.

Kit continued that in the Clinton era, they thought they should recognize more special areas through the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) process. The conversation within BLM went nowhere because it was too broad and too general – BLM managers like things very specific. The result was in frustration, they used the Antiquities Act to create Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and other areas.

Kit said the BLM is starved for resources and it is difficult for management teams to engage in these types of conversations. There is not a call that can be made from the White House about the landscape approach that would get same action as a call about APDs. Kit said this conversation has been occurring in the Washington Office and will continue. One thing that has been suggested is to create an interagency team to enact the Secretarial Order. Kit said before Barry Rose retires, they will get some direction out to help encourage conversation within the Bureau. They will be establishing a management team to assist with the landscape approach effort and plan to create a series of proposals for how the Bureau can effectively institutionalize working on the Landscape Approach.

Wrap up and Review Next Steps

Susan said the immediate next step from this workshop is the facilitation team will put together a summary, including transcripts of the flipcharts and the experience table. They will then take the information from the summary and the external partners' workshop (scheduled January 2011) and see how that informs what we have learned about assessments and step-down processes.

Susan asked participants if they had any feedback for the facilitation team for planning the external lessons learned workshop. She noted one thing they learned was the need to build in more time at the beginning of the workshop to orient people to the REA process..

Feedback and comments:

- Like the two half day sessions – do not make any longer
- The further in advance meetings can be scheduled, the better
- Mention at the beginning of the workshop that we have already incorporated into REAs a number of lessons learned previously
- Set the context for the landscape approach at the beginning of the workshop
- "Show and tell" or poster session in the evening to give BLM/partners opportunity to share what they are doing; also provide examples from REAs to help provide context
- Encourage participants to read landscape approach information on the website before coming to workshop, in addition to reading Lessons Learned Report
- In Kit's overview of the landscape approach, highlight ecoregional direction and explain that we don't have it figured out yet

Kit proposed for the next workshop:

- Landscape approach overview (restructured)

- Talk about the lessons learned that were incorporated into the REAs
- Identify omissions and validate the lessons learned
- Discuss ecoregional direction, acknowledging we don't have lessons learned for step down process

List of handouts

1. Agenda
2. Handout copy of PowerPoint presentation "Rapid Ecoregional Assessments & A Proposed Landscape Approach for Managing Public Lands"

Participants received the "Lessons Learned Report: Ecoregional Assessment Processes" before the workshop and were asked to bring their copy for reference.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: Transcribed Flipchart Notes – Day 1
Attachment 2: Transcribed Flipchart Notes – Day 2
Attachment 3: Table of Summarized and Categorized "Experiences"

Transcribed Flip Chart Notes – Day 1

BLM-REA Lessons Learned Meeting, November 29-30, 2010

Did we miss anything critical?

1. Staffing – Articulating roles and responsibilities necessary to successfully implement – questions/guidance from others
2. Not that much "top down" support from national office/state directors. Pressing local issues trump these efforts. Looking for a memo (leadership message) referencing importance to the field
3. Report didn't mention long-term health realities – false expectation for restoration in some cases
4. Weak w/regard to data
5. Weak w/regard to working at multiple scales
6. Work processes are, in some cases, non-existent, rather than simply in need of change (p.20)
7. Disconnect between NEPA and assessment process. Need clearer understanding of how to write these with NEPA in mind
8. Haven't answered to what degree public involvement is needed in assessment process
9. Issue vs. geography driven – poses challenges that should be addressed
10. What has BLM learned from the landscape approach?
11. How GSG initiative was "stepped down" – couldn't connect ecoregional direction "lessons learned" with GSG – no process articulated
12. More detailed description of the step down process
13. Doesn't set out "problem" REA is supposed to solve

Is your experience consistent? If not, how does it differ?

1. Way we've done business in the past, e.g. alt development for Sagegrouse Plan amendment. Future experiences (current and future partners changing)
2. Trying to "educate" people- challenge when bringing in new people to the process. How to do this is as demand increases?
3. A lot of education of internal staff is missing – Resource specialist level.
4. National leadership is missing
    a. Don't get education & communication pieces
    b. Create sense that this is a "short-lived" initiative (it's a new way of business)

Transcribed Flip Chart Notes – Day 2

BLM-IDEA Lessons Learned Meeting, November 29-30, 2010

Did we miss anything critical?

1. Staffing – Articulating roles and responsibilities necessary to successfully implement – question/guidance from others
2. Not that much "top down" support from national policy/state directors, Creating local issues driving these efforts. Looking for a memo (top/down) message) referencing importance to the work
3. Happy with direction along core tactics/ideas – have exploration for refocusing in some cases
4. Have wrapped to date
5. Small wrapped to working at multiple scales
6. Work processes are, in some cases, non-existent, (rather than simply in need of change (e.g.,))
7. Disconnect between IDEA and assessment process. Need clearer understanding of how to work those with IDEA in mind
8. Haven't addressed to what degree public involvement is needed in assessment process
9. Issue vs geography driven – some challenges (i.e.) should be addressed
10. What has BLM learned from the landscape approach?
11. How OSC initiative was "dropped down" – could I connect ecoregional direction "lessons learned" with OSC – no process articulated
12. More detailed description of the step down process
13. Doesn't set out "problem" IDEA is supposed to solve

Is your experience consistent? If not, how does it differ?

1. Very we've done business in the past, eg. on development for segregate from assessment. Future experience (current and future) requires changing
2. Trying to "educate" people challenge when bringing in new people to the process. How to do this is to demand we assess?
3. A lot of education of internal staff is missing – Resource specialist level
4. National leadership is missing
   a. Don't get education & communication pieces
   b. Create some buy-in's a "good idea" initiative (it's a new way of business)

c. Need to invest in staff (not necessarily "new" staff)

5. Flexibility by necessity but can create too many independent approaches leading to inconsistency, lack of cohesion
6. How to communicate, educate, create top-down leadership, LL Report, Doesn't flesh out what/now to do this
7. Critical nature of spatial data and need for accuracy to create reliance on useful data sets
    a. Accuracy is not captured in discussion of fine/coarser filtered data
    b. Need to be candid with field about data used to draw conclusions
8. While report says "process" over "product," really important that product needs
9. "Independent senior scientist/published" doesn't square w/need to rely on managers/data synthesis/ "messy" stuff
10. Groups that overly focus on process over product not as successful in short/long term. Need to be able to see where we are going (product) Blend. "Product shows" process is worthwhile.
11. Need managers to identify questions – need to shape assessment more than scientists. Blend managers scientists)
12. "Scientists" don't need to be "____" as the report suggests.
13. "Science products need to be used by/useful to managers
14. "Public involvement" and "rapid" not synonymous – not sure how much to have
15. Need greater emphasis on relationships –federal, state agencies
16. Sensitivities of states/federal e.g. wildlife
17. Need to articulate the effect on the field – what will/should this mean to them? How to integrate – good at "perfecting process"
18. Credibility should be based on the quality of work, not just the "names" of scientists.
19. There are no "independent" scientists - this notion devalues our own specialists
20. "Peer review" requires there "peer" to be relevant.
21. Concern with use of "peer review"; can "peer review"/science review of model, "professional" review more accurate.
22. Tension with "senior scientists" and iteration requires agency personnel ("Founding Father's concept – NWFP)
23. "Scientists and public" don't play well together
24. Regional teams were a bottleneck in implementing the plan.

25. What works for me federal agency may create a burden for another. Regional inter-agency teams didn't work well for implementation.
26. Not sure we can't "get there" without REAs
27. Need rules, processes for REAs- developing in progress is a problem.
28. Concern that REAs are making decisions, in practice; 3 examples in Lessons Learned Report (apples/oranges)
29. Avoid use of "education" – term itself
30. What is the role of the specialists in the REA/Landscape Approach process
31. Program integration (substance and budget) is critical
32. Experience and training of resource for staff important for successful implementation; NEPA, RMPs, applications for uses
33. Some RMPs are totally past benefit of REAs; need to communicate that it's not just development – it's implementation and maintenance

Comments: Landscape Approach

1. Addressing viability issue
2. Preparation of stuff to work in "a new way" – People are not currently equipped, in many cases- get to this more quickly!
3. Budget and the way we measure accomplishment
4. Really a need for data Lessons Learned – need to work out these details to be successful in connecting scale

Robin Craig "Stationary is dead: Long Live Transformation" Florida State University College of Law. http://works.bepress.com/robin_craig/41

Transcribed Flip Chart Notes – Day 2
BLM-REA Lessons Learned Meeting, November 29-30, 2010

REAS- Overview

1. Developed management questions
    a. Managers: what's important to them
2. Identify change agents (risks and threats)
3. What data do we have available?
4. Develop work plan
5. Analysis
6. Report/ Other Docs

Implications to Ecoregional Direction

1. Need to ensure BLM employees really understand how ecoregional direction affects day to day management – relationship to "decision-making process" (eg. NEPA, "Instructional Memo")
2. Ecoregional direction should point the way, rather than make "NEPA" decisions/preclude future NEPA options
3. Should develop set of assumptions for ecoregional direction (also helps support need to continue REAs – what REAs lead to)
    a. E.g. That there needs to be direction "between" assumption and a REA and a field office decision
4. Spell out how to use coarse data from REA with fines data found locally

Implications to future REAs

1. Make a case for Bureau funding of future REAs to demonstrate agency commitment
2. Must determine how to "refresh" REAs (with partners) over time
3. Need 'corporate' geo-spatial database – also functions across other agencies – utilizes other's data too
4. Have better structured questions at the start (developed iteratively)
    a. Good blend of managers/scientists
5. Identify how to involve public at some level in developing management questions
6. Capture lessons learned and adapt ongoing processes/REAs as we go (provide good internal communication)
7. Focus questions on regional issues; not issues that are highly localized

8. Balance REA focus between BLM interests and partners interests
9. Budgets are a very real driver of REA scope
10. Disclosure of data quality is important for how REAs are used in the future
11. Certain management questions can be answered at specific "grain" of data
    a. Some coarse, some fine
    b. Need to be explicit about this
12. Ecoregional assessments is a tool, but may not be the only tool in states where not enough BLM land base to justify BLM-base REA.
    a. Assessment at some level is essential

Input to Management Team:

1. Involve field office in decisions/strategies involving work and budgets based on opportunities identified in REAs
2. National level leadership is so important
    a. Especially related to NEPA/planning concerns
    b. Especially describing:
        i. What REA/Ecoregional direction is
        ii. How it's used
        iii. Why it's important/good for BLM
        iv. "Cultural" implication to BLM
        v. Articulate how this is different than what BLM is doing now
        vi. What it isn't
3. Lessons learned tells us that national leadership needs to frame this "initiative" for the agency
    a. It's a better way to get our work done (NEPA/planning)
4. Commitment by Director to identify, specifically, how this will improve our work/quality/efficiency
5. Agency needs time to factor in lessons learned from REAs (first 7) – time to better craft this "business model"
    a. What assessments say about current management
6. Need capacity and support within agency to do this (see 5)
7. Identify leadership "champions" for this approach (not all at national level – "younger")
8. Communicate entire landscape approach to provide context to REAs/ecoregional direction and where they add value
    a. Possibilities and limitations of landscape approach

9. State-by-state road show to engage BLM as stakeholders
10. Leadership commitment expressed through staffing/capacity based on needed r&r

Feedback on Recommendations

9. Capture technical recommendations on REAs
    - Data workshop
    - Opportunity to review key questions as they relate to each REA
10. Clarify 4a. "process" – goals and objectives, include reference to conservation elements
11. Clarify "I" – Resource management plans reference
12. Clarify "I" – "Adaptive management" statement
13. What do we need to do in ecoregional direction to set up for more flexible, adaptive management
14. Broadly cast recommendations for landscape approach
15. 4a & b: "Expert opinion" – replace with "professional opinion"

Follow-up

1. Can still suggest data sets for standardization/compilation (Pat Mahoney)
2. Barry --- encourage Bob Abbey to use the blog to dialogue on web materials

Summarized and categorized "experiences"
BLM-REA Lessons Learned Meeting, November 29-30, 2010

Capacity	Experience and training of resource staff is important for successful implementation; NEPA, RMPs, applications for uses
	Need to articulate staff roles and responsibilities to successfully implement
	Need to define the role of the specialists in the REA/Landscape Approach process
	Need to invest in staff (not necessarily "new" staff)
Communication	A lot of education of internal staff is missing in the REA process (ex: resource specialist level)
	Avoid use of "education" – term itself
Data	It is naïve for us to infer "trends" or "status" using spatial data with less than 50% accuracy
	Disclose the data quality and availability.
Implementation	REAs should be informational not decisional
	Regional interagency teams can perpetuate tensions between regulatory and land management agencies
	Regional inter-agency teams can be a bottleneck in implementation
	Senior scientists shouldn't develop management direction (i.e.. Founding Fathers concept)
	Work processes are, in some cases, non-existent, rather than simply in need of change
Interface between science and management	A blend of managers and scientists need to shape the assessment questions
	Science products need to be used by/useful to managers
	Senior scientists won't engage in collaborating and developing questions with managers and other stakeholders.
Leadership	Lack of leadership is creating the impression that this is just another short-lived initiative, rather than a new way of doing business
	National leadership is missing from the REA process
Other	Need to emphasize equally both process and product. "Product" shows the process is worthwhile

Summarized and categorized "experiences" *(continued)*

Partnering	Need greater awareness and emphasis on relationships, for example state and federal agencies, e.g. wildlife
Program Integration	Need to articulate the effect on the field – what will/should this mean to them?
	Program integration (substance and budget) is critical to effecting real change
Public Process	Building trust and ownership with the public can be difficult within the short timeframe of REAs
	Collaboration will change the way we do business in the future (ex: alternatives for Sage-grouse Plan Amendment)
	Need to develop collaborative process to address changing participants
	Scientists generally resist being involved in public processes
Purpose of REAs	Need to clearly articulate the value of REAs beyond just developing RMPs i.e. Implementation and maintenance
	Not sure that REAs are necessary
Science	Credibility should be based on the quality of work, not just the "names" of scientists
	Peer review should be conducted by people with relevant expertise.
	REAs defined by issue vs. geography pose different science and public participation challenges
	REAS should not set a false expectation for restoration
	There are no "independent" scientists - this notion devalues our own specialists
	There needs to be some ability to customize individual REAs, but there needs to be some consistent framework

BLM Rapid Ecoregional Assessments: Lessons Learned Workshop
January 31 – February 1, 2011

Embassy Suites, Denver International Airport
7001 Yampa Street, Denver, CO 80249

The purpose of this meeting is to:

1. Develop a shared understanding of lessons learned in landscape scale assessment/planning processes and management based on the ***Lessons Learned Report – Ecoregional Assessment Processes*** (2010) and participants' own experiences
2. Identify the implications of these lessons learned for the development of future assessments
3. Identify the implications of these lessons learned on ecoregional direction/step-down processes

Monday, January 31

1:00 p.m.	**Welcome, Introductions and Meeting Overview**	Susan Hayman, Facilitator, EnviroIssues
1:30 p.m.	**BLM's Landscape Approach** ▪ Overview of the landscape approach ▪ Rapid ecoregional assessments – How their design incorporates previous lessons learned ▪ Ecoregional direction – A concept still under development ▪ Group Q&A	Kit Muller, Strategic Planner, BLM Travis Haby, National Operations Center, BLM
2:30 p.m.	**Break**	
2:45 p.m.	**Lessons Learned Report** ▪ Key Findings ▪ Group Q&A	Maggie McCaffrey, Co-Author, U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution
3:15 p.m.	**Lessons Learned with Landscape Scale Assessment & Planning** ▪ Response to the lessons learned report ▪ Other personal experience with landscape scale assessment and planning ▪ Input to improve future rapid ecoregional assessments	Facilitated Discussion
4:45 p.m.	Wrap up and Day 2 Overview	Susan Hayman
5:00 p.m.	***Break***	
5:20 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	**Poster session and social hour for Landscape-Scale Assessments**	

Tuesday, February 1

7:30 a.m.	Coffee/hot tea available in meeting room	
8:00 a.m.	Recap of Day 1	Susan Hayman
8:30 a.m.	**Implications – Rapid Ecoregional Assessment Processes** ▪ What are the implications of these lessons learned for improving the assessment process? ▪ How can we improve the process for future REAs?	Facilitated Discussion
10:00 a.m.	BREAK	
10:15 a.m.	**Implications – Ecoregional Direction Development** ▪ What are the implications of these lessons learned for development of ecoregional direction? ▪ What elements would you expect ecoregional direction/step-down processes to include?	Facilitated Discussion
11:45 a.m.	Wrap up and Review Next Steps	Susan Hayman Kit Muller
12:00 p.m.	ADJOURN	